BUDDHISM :
MY CONCEPTION OF IT

BY

DR. R. L. SONI, M.B.

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1945

MAHA BODHI SOCIETY
4-A, BANKIM CHATTERJEE STREET
CALCUTTA

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CHAPTER I

THE MESSAGE

HOLD TO TRUTH AS YOUR LIGHT ;
TAKE TRUTH FOR YOUR GUIDE.
LOOK TO NOTHING ELSE FOR LIGHT,
NOR FOR REFUGE ANY OTHER GUIDE.

Lord Buddha.

THANKSGIVING

Thanks to Him, the Lord !
Thanks to His Dharma,—His Voice ! !
Thanks to the Sangha,—His Limbs ! ! !

For finding the Path,
Gaining Nibbana's height.
For guiding our journey,
To the joys of Light.
A constant Example,
Of Practice of Dhamma.

ALL THESE SHOW THE PATH,
WHICH WALKING, WE CANNOT FAIL.

LORD BUDDHA'S MANDATE.

"Go ye now, O Bhikkhus, for the benefit of the many, for the welfare of mankind, out of compassion for the world. Preach the Doctrine, which is Glorious in the beginning, Glorious in the middle, and Glorious in the end, in the Spirit as well as in the letter. There are beings whose eyes are scarcely covered with dust, but if the doctrine is not preached to them, they cannot attain salvation. Proclaim to them a Life of Holiness. They will understand the Doctrine and accept it."

Mahāvagga Vinaya Pitaka

Thus they moved out from the sacred vicinity of Benares, the home of so many philosophies, Arahants, 61 in number, including Lord Buddha Himself, going in various directions, with a message so sweet, so noble and so joyful, for the good of the entire world, out of compassion for mankind in all times and climes. This message, rational in the beginning, full of virtue in the middle and pregnant with lasting changeless bliss in the end, transmitted from the lips of no less a personality than Lord Buddha Himself, at the ever productive intellectual arena of the Gangetic plains of India, 25 centuries back, and received warmly all round for the intrinsic worth it had, is still the solace and hope of over one third of the human tenants of this globe. Even in the non-Buddhist world, a sense of appreciation for Buddhism is awakening. The rational West, imbued with the spirit of scientific enquiry, after its failures in extrospective excursions, appears now the most suited Recipient-Prospective, of this noble and rational message. India too, the original transmitter, should now try to become the worthy receiver of this message. Only when the receiver is tuned, the Message can be received.

"By ourselves is evil done,
By ourselves we pain endure ;
By ourselves we cease from wrong,
By ourselves become we pure.
No one saves us, but ourselves,
No one can and no one may ;
We ourselves must walk the path—
Buddhas only teach the way."

From P. Carus' translation.

THE SECURE REFUGE.

WE BOW TO THE BUDDHA FOR HIS,

Advocacy of Reason,
Methods of Wisdom.
Breadth of Goodwill,
Depth of Knowledge.
Freedom from Dogma,
From Slavery and Caste.
Understanding of Existence,
Interpretation of Life.
Ponderings over Pain,
Promise of Escape.
Depth of Psychology,
Expanse of Philosophy.
Message of Self-reliance,
Spirit of Perseverence.
Love of Truth,
Watchfulness and Self-effort.
Service to others,
Example of Self-sacrifice.
Conquest of Vice,
Life of Virtue.
Compassion for animals,
Love without bounds.
Broad Missionary spirit,
Perfection of Toleration.
Path of Culture,
Way to Self-conquest.
Freedom from Sensual pleasure,
Love of Renunciation.

Height of Ideal,
Realisation of Truth.
Ideal of Nibbāna,
And final. . . . ESCAPE.

WE BOW TO SUCH A BUDDHA,
WE PINE TO IMBIBE HIS DHAMMA,
AND CRAVE BLESSINGS OF HIS SANGHA.

R. L. SONI.

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCTION

THE CONVERSION :—Though we had a slight acquaintance with Buddhism before, our real understanding of the subject dates back only to the early part of the year 1933, when we met a venerable Bhikkhu, an all night discussion with whom, under a tree in a monastery outside the city, wrought a marvellous change in us. That night changed us into an ardent Buddhist. Perhaps the ground was already prepared for the seed. In October, 1932, the cold hand of death had snatched away from us, our youngest and dearest brother, who was indeed a genius, and the shock was felt as terribly upsetting. Strangely enough, his death synchronised with our serious personal illness, which perhaps made us hypersensitive to the shock. Nothing appeared to bestow real consolation, though a psychological patch-up was effected through some personal philosophical musings on the Devali day of 1932.* Though we continued with professional and other engagements, the mind felt restless for consolation. It appears there was needed a philosophy to console us—a philosophy centring round the nucleus of sufferings, inevitably associated with existence. And as good Kamma would have it, such a philosophy was ministered to us by the Venerable Bhikkhu early in 1933. As the eagerness to imbibe the new concepts was keen, the understanding was quick. Though study and reflection later added much to the knowledge on the subject, we feel indebted to the Venerable monk for the truths sown in our mind that memorable night, when within a few hours was acquired a perception, which surpasses all our later intellectual acquisitions.

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* See Appendix "Self-consolation".

"MY CONCEPTION OF BUDDHISM", which forms the nucleus of the present work, was written towards the end of June 1933, in response to an invitation to read a paper on the subject, before the Paungde Literary Society on the 1st of July 1933. The views therein expressed are the views we held at that time, and though our views on the theory and practice of the subject in outline remain almost the same, yet in detail those have expanded tremendously during the interval. It was intended to enlarge and entirely recast the original paper, but for want of time to do so and out of fear of inevitable postponements, the original paper is presented in slightly revised form. We admit, the treatment of the subject as set out in the paper, is most sketchy, but we also submit that in the compass of a few pages meant to be delivered before an audience within a specified time, it was not possible to epitomise in detail or run at length through the whole of the vast treasure of Buddhist teaching. The paper is followed by a series of Questions and Answers which formed the discussion following the paper.

MISCONCEPTIONS ROUND BUDDHISM:—Later, when some of our learned friends and well-wishers learnt of the conversion, they expressed all sorts of views against Buddhism and it was indeed shocking to know that such misconceptions existed against such a noble Dhamma. But, we were glad to make out that such misconceptions were merely superficial and were rooted in mis-information. A little logic dispelled the clouds, and the antagonists were changed into admirers of Buddhism, if not actual converts. The article "God and Buddhism" published in the March issue of the Maha Bodhi Journal in 1935, emanated from one of such discussions. Later we came across the report of an oration by a learned Christian to a really learned audience in Rangoon, in the course of which the speaker characterised Buddhism as the 'Religion of Despair'. In reply thereto, our article "Is Buddhism a Pessimistic Religion?" was published in the Buddha Day number of the Maha Bodhi in May, 1935.

Buddhism is not pessimism: it is the doctrine of 'Yathā-bhūta'. The Buddhist tries to look upon life 'as it actually is' and not merely 'as it appears to be'. He sees the disease, understands its gravity, but stands undaunted: he puts in heroic efforts to cure it and is quite optimistic concerning the final result. Isn't such an outlook OPTIMISM OF THE MOST EXCELLENT TYPE? Buddhism is indeed the religion of such a Noble Optimism.

In the course of the years that followed the conversion, through study and through contact with people—Buddhists and Non-Buddhists—we have come to form the impression that there are many more misconceptions gathered round the doctrines of Lord Buddha and that not only non-Buddhists labour under such misconceptions, but also some of those who have been for generations and centuries enjoying the balm and sunshine of His teachings. Some of such prevailing notions against Buddhism are that it is NIHILISTIC, INDIVIDUALISTIC, RITUALISTIC, FATALISTIC and that it sanctions MEAT-EATING etc., etc. That such notions are distortions of facts will be clear from a study of the actual scriptures.

That Buddhism is generally considered to be a religion enunciating principles of life not meant for the worldly folk, also is a wrong notion.

Buddhism is the religion of Optimistic Vigour, full of Universal Compassion and Good Wishes and endowed with Self-reliance and Noble Energy, physical and mental. It makes of fate a plastic slave, of rituals a mockery, of lasting ego-ism a flat denial and stimulates its votaries to heroic perseverence in the cause of Truth through Goodness, Service and Contemplation : its Summum Bonum, the cherished Nibbāna, is not Nihilism, but a definite and perfect negation of all that is Changeful, Painful and Unreal. The vast philosophy and deep psychology of Buddhism have been ably epitomised as :—

TO CEASE FROM EVIL,
TO ACQUIRE VIRTUE
and TO PURIFY THE HEART.

From the meditational point of view, an individual is a bundle of thoughts, his body a projection of thoughts. This bundle is a mixture of good and bad thoughts. The evil thoughts are to be eliminated and kept away, the virtuous thoughts are to be saved, increased and multiplied. Mere ceasing from evil is not enough : a noble effort is needed to replace evil by good, and acquired good must also be purified. All this constitutes self-culture. In the course of this culture, the individual, through his true words, good wishes and noble actions helps all his neighbours, and fills all with the perfume of nobility. Thus Buddhism is not Individualistic : it is not a negative treatment : it is indeed a POSITIVE PHILOSOPHY.

There is one thing which ought not to be omitted, namely the three aspects of existence, viz. : Anicca, Dukkha and Anatta. In life there are both joys and sorrows. Sorrow is pain : even joy is potential pain. One feels joy when one accomplishes what one craves for.

Having accomplished one object and gained joy thereof, one craves to perpetuate that joy, but as joy is related to the accomplished object, perpetuation of joy depends on perpetuation of the accomplishment. Perpetuation of the accomplishment is an impossibility, because existence is essentially a composite show, the parts of which can never remain together forever in the same order. The changing permutations of the components rob one of the one combination to which one's likings are set with great joy, and hence the pain. Thus life is sorrow, for existence is an interplay of incessant change. There is nothing in man that knows no change ; all is incessant motion, a constant change. 'Soul' is a word often used for a supposed changeless entity in man, but on proper analysis, this entity fails to manifest a permanently changeless state. At its best it is a focus of individualised consciousness which is rooted in cravings. Thus as it is a temporary phenomenon, there can be no permanent soul. Why is there any controversy at all ? Man is at his best when selfless, he is at his worst when self-ful or selfish. The noblest virtues are expressed in selfless actions. Selflessness is the pivot round which all heroism, all nobility, all self-sacrifice, all purity and greatness revolve. Selflessness is an expression of Anatta and to understand the Anatta doctrine one must understand the glory attached to the term self-sacrifice or selflessness.

RATIONAL ATTITUDE OF BUDDHISM :—One of the great attractions of Buddhism is the vivid and practical appeal it makes to the rational faculty of man. In performing an action ,intellectual conviction as to the reasonableness of performing that action, can generate much self-confidence, which in its turn can do much to sustain endeavour *i.e.*, create perseverence, and lead to success, the glory of action. Rational understanding is an essential guide in the field of action. Lord Buddha recognised this fact and has very ably epitomised it in the Kālāma Sutta of the Anguttara Nikāya, which translated by P. L. Narasu runs as follows :—

> "Do not believe in traditions, merely because they have been handed down for many generations and in many places ; do not believe in anything, because it is rumoured and spoken of by many ; do not believe, because the written statement of some old sage is produced ; do not believe in what you have fancied, thinking that, because it is extraordinary, it must have been implanted by a deva or a wonderful being. After observation and analysis, when it agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it."

This Sutta indeed glorifies rationalism and provides a marvellous justification of the reasoning faculty of man. With reason short-circuited, human endeavour is likely to be fruitlessly spent. Under these conditions, if success is at all attained, it is accidental. With reason neglected, human intelligence stands degraded and steps back to the animal state. It is clear, Buddhism definitely and emphatically discourages dogmas. Reason is acclaimed by this Dhamma as the Dictator of faith. Lord Buddha, fully conscious of the evils that follow blind faith or lack of reason, recognised the value of exercising reason while one is on the way to self-conquest through ethico-moral culture. His religion is one of Rational Self-Culture. Blind faith and superstitions are definitely discouraged ; wisdom, earnestness, purity and meditation are strongly emphasised. Every one has the right to think independently, and intellectual slavery is tabooed. As one moves higher and higher in understanding, the mystery of life, the level of the reasoning faculty also goes on moving up. Wisdom is the golden ladder which connects phenomena with ultra-phenomena. It is the dawning of Bodhi which liberates one from the bondage of existence and anchors one safely on the farther shore—Nibbāna. Thus, reason has an important place in the spiritual evolution of man, and Lord Buddha has not only recognised it, but He has also given it an important place in His Dhamma. With Buddhism, pure science and anything else which advocates reason, can never come into conflict.

THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT:—The universe we see around us is not the whimsical manifestation of a divine personality. Irrational explanations dealing with phenomena in nature could have satisfied, as they did, the human mind in its intellectual infancy, but a properly developed intellect cannot accept ideas and conceptions enveloped with a divinity which falls far short of the standard by which efficiency, goodness and justice are judged in the life of man. In fact, meaningless whims attributed to a divinity have hopelessly dimmed the status of divinity in man's conception. Phenomena cannot be considered as whimsical display of divine likes and dislikes. Nature abhors whims, just as it abhors a vacuum. Phenomena in nature, whether we understand them or not, are processions of events, correlated successions of causes and effects. Nothing proceeds without a cause and no cause fails to produce an effect. This basic law is inviolable and is applicable to phenomena, inanimate and animate alike. Lord Buddha enunciated the vital application of this law in a marvellously perfect manner, and has termed it "The Law of Dependent

Origination". The chain as enunciated by Him is as follows:—

"1. Ignorance is the cause of The Tendencies.
2. The Tendencies are ,, ,, ,, Consciousness.
3. Consciousness is ,, ,, ,, Mind & Body.
4. Mind and Body are ,, ,, ,, The six senses.
5. The Six Senses ,, ,, ,, ,, Contact.
6. Contact is ,, ,, ,, Feeling.
7. Feeling ,, ,, ,, ,, Craving.
8. Craving ,, ,, ,, ,, Grasping.
9. Grasping ,, ,, ,, ,, Becoming.
10. Becoming ,, ,, ,, ,, Birth.
11. Birth ,, ,, ,, ,, Pain.
12. Pain ,, ,, ,, ,, Faith.
13. Faith ,, ,, ,, ,, Delight.
14. Delight ,, ,, ,, ,, Joy.
15. Joy ,, ,, ,, ,, Calmness.
16. Calmness ,, ,, ,, ,, Happiness.
17. Happiness ,, ,, ,, ,, Concentration.
18. Concentration ,, ,, ,, ,, Knowing and seeing things as they really are.
19. Knowing and seeing things as they really are ,, ,, ,, ,, Weariness.
20. Weariness ,, ,, ,, ,, Passionlessness.
21. Passionlessness ,, ,, ,, ,, Deliverance.
22. Deliverance ,, ,, ,, ,, Knowledge in Extinction."*

THE PLACE OF EVOLUTION:—The phenomenon of evolution is another biological manifestation of the Law of Cause and Effect. It is clear that all phenomena are rooted in ignorance, but it should be understood that all phenomena are not perfect ignorance. Ignorance in its encounters engenders experience, and enrichment of that experience gives a glimpse of truth. Thus phenomena come to be combinations of Ignorance and Truth—ignorance of certain aspects, truth of other aspects. The quality of the mixture is determined by the proportion of the ingredients. A succession of such mixtures in which the component of Truth successively goes on progressing with few deviations, constitutes a procession of models in nature, arranged in their order of development with reference to their structural efficiency and functional superiority, intellectual and mental. Such a procession indeed is the phenomenon of Evolution, and, as this phenomenon is a practical application of the Law of Cause and Effect, Buddhism is in perfect accord with it.

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* "The Finest Religion in the World".

BUDDHISM AND SCIENCE:—Modern Science has done much to determine and evaluate some of the laws which govern phenomena, and the general principles, which science has enunciated, appear to be in perfect accord with the principles enunciated in Buddhism. Buddhism, in terms of scientific methods, is quite scientific, and Buddhists feel a great pride in hailing Buddhism as scientific. In terms of the spirit of the modern age, it may be a genuine pride, for the modern age being the Age of Science, anything stamped with its approval is considered worthy of attention, but in our opinion hailing Buddhism as scientific should not be a matter of much pride. Of course, Science can pride itself of discoveries in the field of pure sciences, for it even in its present infancy can boast of having discovered some of the laws working in phenomena, which along with many more, were declared 25 centuries back in the valley of the Ganges. The principles underlying scientific methods are sound, and the resulting discoveries, when applied to noble ends, quite fruitful and praiseworthy. That is why the world is deluded by Science. No doubt Science is noble, but being without a Will of its own, it cannot be denied that it is blind. Being blind, it cannot lead: it can only delude and mislead. No wonder therefore that noble scientific discoveries are applied by evil tendencies of the human mind to destructive purposes. Only when Science gets inspired by moral ethics, can it deserve to be congratulated for having discovered a way by which to steer humanity clear to real happiness, from the present chaos of mutual distrust, poverty in the midst of plenty, and clouds and cries of war all around. That should be the aim of all knowledge, whether scientific or religious. To bring about such a glory, Buddhism has a golden function to perform. The Dhamma is admirably suited to be a leader today. It is as applicable to the world conditions today, as it was when first announced 25 centuries back: it is ever fresh and ever applicable.

True, Buddhism is scientific, but it should not be lulled to lethargy merely for that: True, Pure Science is noble, but that is not enough. Buddhism cannot afford to associate itself unconditionally with Science, for Science, though really noble in its Method, is liable to evil counsel in its practice and has no stable character so far as its theories and hypotheses go. Though Buddhism has not gained much by being hailed as 'scientific', Science has definite Good to command, if it associates with the Dhamma i.e., the ethico-moral guidance of Buddhism. Buddhism should strive on till Science is Buddhistised, and a golden chapter opened in the history of the world. That is the message Buddhism holds out to the modern Age of Science.

BUDDHISM AND OTHER FAITHS :—Buddhism is an excellent philosophy in which an ethical and moral code is enunciated to a perfect degree. In fact Buddhism is mainly devoted to ethico-moral discipline, and, through that personal discipline, it attains to self-conquest. As such it can form an admirable supplement to any religion, and it did act as a supplement to other religions. In Tibet, China and Japan, Buddhism supplemented the local religions: it did not expel local faiths: it merely stimulated people to moral awakening and ethical glory. Viewed in this manner Buddhism may be termed a moralising catalytic agent and a civilising force.

No religion worth the name can oppose ethico-moral discipline. If a religion does so, that religion is not worth the name. As ethico-moral discipline is a synonym of Buddhism, no other religion should dare to oppose it. Hinduism should feel ennobled in its presence, Islam should feel purified through such a discipline. Indeed on such a platform Hindu-Muslim tensions would disappear: Hindus and Muslims with their ethico-moral tone raised, would shun the meaningless tensions prevailing at present in India. A good Muslim and a good Hindu can never clash if they will come to understanding. This understanding can be bestowed by an ethico-moral outlook which can easily be derived from the COMMON PLATFORM OF BUDDHISM.

Comparative theology being outside our scope, no attempt has been made to compare and contrast the religions. There is no advantage to be gained in creating controvercies with other religions. We cannot have the audacity to compare different 'LIGHTS', for all 'LIGHTS' served their purpose in different times and climes. Moreover as said above, Buddhism is an ethico-moral discipline, which can supplement any faith, and therefore should have no quarrel with any other religion. It should be and indeed is the most tolerant of all faiths, for it can befriend and enlighten all. Historically viewed, Hinduism is deeply related to Buddhism, for both grew out of the fertile soil of Brahminism ; early Christianity was greatly influenced by Buddhistic ideas prevailing in Western Asia and Eastern Europe at the time of its birth, and other faiths too directly or indirectly, to a greater or less extent must have been influenced by the example and precept of the multitude of Buddhist missionaries who even in the early days of Buddhism carried from India the torch of Light and Culture to distant lands.

BUDDISM AND VARIOUS LANDS :—The matchless Indian pioneers of the early Buddhist period, fired with the missionary zeal of spreading Truth and serving humanity, carried the Torch of Buddhist culture, to distant lands where still the 'Light' kindled by those un-named hands is shining in its new garb. Ceylon, Burma and Siam, Tibet, China and Japan, are highly indebted to Buddhism for the beauty of their arts, the glory of their cultures and the enduring character imparted to their civilisations. The Central deserts of Asia, the centres of culture and civilisation at the Asiatic-European junction, the lovely land of Egypt and many other places were not left untouched by the perfume of Buddhist teachings.

What a curious phenomenon ! India, where Buddhism was born and blessed in a golden period, is at present without the blessings of the Dhamma. The question of the expulsion of Buddhism from India is a very complicated one ,and the author reserves his views for a separate publication. But, let it be pointed out, that the appalling poverty, the degenerated caste system, the meaningless communal tensions and similar things are all rooted in the absence of ethical understanding and in the neglect of cultivating the virtues. The cure of these woes lies in the re-introduction of Buddhism into India. Social equality, ethical morality and well directed charity can do much to melt away the present misery of India. Buddhism teaches 'understanding' of things, of facts and their co-relation, on a moral background in a sympathetic way. For 'smooth sailing' not only in matters individual, social, religious and political, but also in all fields of human activities, 'the psychology of understanding' is to be applied.

LIMITATIONS OF BUDDHISM:—Buddhism, in its deep sense, is a marvellous interpretation of actual Truth as applied to phenomena, and, in its ultimate sense, is a path that leads to the gateway out of phenomena. It does not touch Ultra-phenomena and very wisely too, for human consciousness, limited as it is with finite conceptions of relativity, cannot conceive of facts relating to the Infinite. Dhamma is a boat in which to cross the ocean of existence: once the farther shore is reached, the boat can be discarded. This is the actual relationship of Dhamma, Life and Nibbāna. It should also be clearly understood that Dhamma takes on itself only the duty to guide us to the gateway out of phenomena, and does not stop to explain in detail other facts which can have no bearing on the case. The aim is the escape, and the criterion for action is the success of the journey towards that escape; all else is secondary.

THE THREE JEWELS:—Buddhism consists of Three Jewels Ratanattayaṁ—the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. The life of the Buddha is so well known that no attempt is here made to describe it. To deal with the rules and regulations of the Sangha is also considered out of place, as those rules do not concern the laity. Only a brief sketch of the practical teachings of the Lord and their implications to the modern world is offered.

THE SANGHA:—The Sangha, the holy Order of Buddhist monks, is a democratic confederation of persons, who inspired by Buddhist Ideals renounce the worldly ties, voluntarily taking on themselves the vow of personal poverty and residing in peaceful secluded or thought-inspiring spots, like monasteries, grave-yards, hill views, garden groves or cave retreats, and who devote their time to ethico-moral discipline through study, meditation, maintenance of a decorous behaviour and other personal discipline in accordance with the Vinaya precepts, and service to others, through teaching and preaching. The Brethren are strictly forbidden the handling of money: they wear a monastic robe of orange colour: they are officially permitted eight possessions, namely three robes, a loin cloth, an alms bowl, a razor, a needle and a water-strainer. The Bhikkhus (the Pali word for the members of the holy Order) do not cook their food, but depend for it on the lay followers of the Order. The monks usually go out singly or accompanied by an attendant called Kapiyakāraka to receive the offerings. They move in silent dignity, from door to door, with measured paces, their eyes fixed on the ground, their faces radiant with compassion and an aroma of Peace around them, till their almsbowl is full enough for one meal. Then they retire to a suitable secluded place and in deep silent meditation finish the meal before noon. The rest of their time passes in study, meditation, teaching or preaching.

The discipline in the Order is maintained by the rules and regulations enunciated in the Vinaya Pitaka, infringement of which brings a penalty from the holy congregation and provokes condemnation by public opinion. It should also be mentioned that entry into the Sangha does not mean a vow of life-long adhesion : members who find the discipline too hard are allowed to return to the worldly life.

As a humble return for the immense spiritual and intellectual gain bestowed on society by the Buddhist monks, the Buddhist laity are ever eager to gain merit by serving food and offering other prescribed physical requirements, to the *bona fide* members of the noble fraternity. As service of one meal a day, attending on them when sick, periodic offering of robes and other specified general requirements and occasional offering of monasteries and gardens, etc., afford practically the only chances to serve the members of the holy Order, the laity are ever eager not to miss such opportunities. It is therefore no wonder that every morning the house-lady strives to do her best at the culinary art ; and in cases of illness of a monk, his disciples flock to his beside, while at times of festivals sacred to the memory of the Lord of Compassion the whole community vie with one another in the display of charity to the Order.

There are many other points which have not been dealt with in this paper or in the introduction or other parts of this work. Buddhism is a vast field of ethics, philosophy and psychology, and every word in it provides ample scope for comment. Obviously it is beyond our scope to give a detailed exposition of the subject.

The following quotation from a learned Bhikkhu, gives in a few words, an excellent summary of Lord Buddha's Dhamma—

"When a doctor sees a patient, he first satisfies himself that the patient is sick, then he diagnoses the case (finds the cause), prescribes the remedy (removes the cause), and the patient is cured. Similarly, Lord Buddha, the World's Greatest Spiritual Physician, saw that the world was sick with Suffering ; He saw that Craving is the Cause of Suffering ; He saw that Suffering is removed by destroying Craving ; and He prescribed the Remedy: Craving is destroyed by walking on the Noble Eightfold Path of Right Knowledge, Right Aim, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Occupation, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. These are the Four Noble Truths, the Four Pillars of Buddhism."

This indeed is Buddhism in brief.

For ourselves, let us borrow, to conclude this introduction, the following words which Sir Edwin Arnold puts into the mouth of a devotee :—

"Ah ! Blessed Lord ! Oh, High Deliverer !
Forgive this feeble script, which doth thee wrong,
Measuring with little wit thy lofty Love.
Ah ! Lover, Brother, Guide, Lamp of the Law !"

R. L. SONI.

MY CONCEPTION OF BUDDHISM.*

Let us begin with a common observation. In our everyday life we see that no two persons are alike. One differs from the other in one or the other way. We differ in our birth, in our lives, and in death: we differ in whole, and we differ in detail. In brief we differ everywhere and in every thing. We see that one is born, as they say, with a silver spoon in his mouth, another in poverty, one swims in opulence and passes his days in luxury; another faces starvation, disease or misery; at every step pleasure awaits the commands of one while sorrow and tears form the lot of another: one is blessed with kind relations and true friends, while the other is a solitary desolate figure: one brother becomes a great man, while the other remains a beggar. Verily to one, life is a round of pleasure, to another it is nothing but misery. Bridging these two extremes, lie myriads of gradations passing from pleasure to sorrow.

Obviously, the first question that presents itself to the human mind is: Why is all this? Why do these inequalities exist? This is a question, perhaps as old as mankind itself, and it has been taxing the human intelligence from times immemorial. Its various attempted solutions became the nuclei of various religions. Religions solved it in their own way, and later on, Science stepped in.

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* The paper read was before the Paungde Literary Society (Burma), on 1st of July, 1933.

The Universe that we perceive, with all its diversities, is running on a definite plan and is subject to definite Laws—known or unknown. Everything is traceable to a Cause. We perceive in the great laboratory of Nature that nothing arises without an appropriate cause and that effects follow Causes with perfect regularity. This we observe to be inherent in Nature. A good effect must have a good cause and a bad effect a bad origin. This is a Law—the Law of Cause and Effect—which the Lord Buddha discovered while steeped in intense meditation under the famous Bodhi tree some 2500 years ago. This is a Law shared by Science and Buddhism alike. But Science goes pace by pace with Religion only to a limited extent, beyond which both hold conflicting views. When an attempt is made to analyse the question of the mode of transmission of good effects from one life to another, they diverge. Science believes in hereditary transmission, while Buddhism brings in the doctrine of Individual Kamma. Both have their adherents, and both have their pros and cons. In the present state of scientific knowledge, indeed, it is hard to reconcile these two conflicting theories. Further, to complicate matters, every religion has its own doctrine on the subject, but comparative Theology being beyond the aim and scope of this paper, we must leave the consideration of Science and other Religions and proceed to understand what is meant by the Buddhist theory of Kamma.

Human physiology and psychology teach us that a human being is a unit of mind cloaked in a highly evolved physical body. The world, nay the entire universe, forms the environment of this unit. The environment acts on the human mind and the mind reacts to the environment: the action brings reaction and leaves an impression on the mind: these impressions by subsequent actions and reactions add up and form our experience: further reactions are to be checked by this fund of experience, a good sight, a good song, a good taste or a good movement leaves a good impression, a good cause leads to a good effect and a bad action leave a bad impression. Our actions are the reactions to our environment and all these reactions arise from Thought: Thought itself is an outcome of our past fund of experience in view of our present environment and is regulated by both these factors; all actions leave an additional impression. This experience gives us our Sṁkhāras or inclinations, and inclinations are modified, reduced or augmented by the nature and intensity of our actions, physical or mental. For this reason Buddhism discards and condemns lethargy and idling. It is a call to Action—intense and noble, physical and mental—to control and ultimately negate our Saṁkhāras.

Let us state here the Buddhist analysis of the human body. "This I, is a bundle of five khandhas produced by cravings rooted in Ignorance."

The Five Khandhas:—

1. Rūpakkhandha—Our physical body formed of four bhutas or elements—solids, liquids, gases and heat.
2. Vedanākkhandha—Our sensations.
3. Saññākkhandha—Our perceptions.
4. Saṅkhārakkhanda—Our inclinations or ideations.

and 5. Viññāṇakkhandha—Our consciousness or cognitions.

All these combined constitute this 'I' and 'you' and 'he' and as we move from the first to the last khanda, we pass from grosser to finer manifestations. All our actions, sensations, perceptions and inclinations are impressed on the Viññāṇa khanda. All that we do, speak or think is there, conscious or subconscious: in fact this 'I' is a projection and grosser manifestation of this Viññāna. Viññāṇa is the store-house of individual Kamma or total impressions. A true, "actor there is not, but only actions done."

At death the body disintegrates and breaks down, Sensations, perceptions and inclinations disappear and involute into that fine force which remains and is called Kamma. This Kamma Force, preserving the memory in toto—memory of all that was done, good or bad—darts out like a wireless message from the dead body and seeks an appropriate physical Receiver, anywhere in the universe, ready tuned to its vibrations, in the form of a just starting conception in the womb of a mother. There again the physical material is furnished anew, 'yet the same' evolves, grows and projects the five khandhas, till it is ultimately delivered as a complete body at birth. This new body is, not the same, nor yet another'—'not the same' for the fund of kamma it brings from past records.

From birth to birth the aggregate of five khandhas—the psycho-physical combination constituting personality—goes on experiencing pain and pleasure and the stock of impressions that remains after additions and subtractions is, in Buddhist philosophy, called the Kamma of the individual at that particular moment. This in brief is the Buddhist Doctrine of Kamma. Kamma is not Fate or luck, nor is it Passive. Buddhism may be called passive, inasmuch as it enjoins us to abstain from Evil, but it is worth while knowing that Buddhism also exhorts us to be positively good. It is a definite Truth and calls for a life of Action: It is the doctrine of strenuous activity for noble ideals. Even he who is now a good man may not rest contented with his goodness for he can not escape from the fruits of his past bad kamma, though as a result of deeds of peculiar merit, he may gain certain environmental advantages, which may help him to ward off the effects of his past bad Kamma. It is therefore that a Buddhist endeavours to help his higher evolution and in addition to being ever vigilant, has to be also strenuously diligent.

Kamma is the outcome of the operation of two laws. One is the Law of Cause and Effect, and the other is the Law of Opposites. The one teaches: "As we sow, so shall we reap, sooner or later, here or hereafter": the other points out the way by which we can neutralise bad Kamma by good. After such adjustments, whatever Kamma remains, is the Kamma at our credit. It is this balance of Kamma that determines our birth. But—

Birth, Life and Death,
Sufferings, Disease and Sorrow,
Are nothing but repetitions,
Of Pain, today and tomorrow.

In other words life is misery, life is Dukkha—a repetition of Dukkha. Its cause is Kamma. Is there no way out of this Misery?

This leads us to the Four Noble Truths—the four Gems of Buddhist Philosophy, the four Lights, which can annihilate Kamma and thus liberating us, give us Nibbāna.

The object of life in Buddhist Philosophy is to neutralise Kamma by Supreme Knowledge. This process may take a minute or may run through centuries. This Supreme Knowledge lies in the four Great Truths.

The world we see around us, with its pleasures, shows, beauty and temptations, is a place of Dukkha. All this joy, health and beauty end in sorrow, disease and ugliness. Incessant change marks this existence. What real pleasure can there be when one knows that it is all temporary—a passing phase—a delusion? Therefore world is Dukkha—naked or veiled it is Dukkha all the same. Life is conditioned by Impermanence: it is suffering—physical and mental: it is void of Reality. No wonder, our being is incessantly at 'dis-EASE': our physical body, our sensations, perceptions, inclinations and cognitions are continuously at 'dis-EASE'. True, life is 'dis-EASE' of the five khandhas. What real peace can one have with this 'dis-EASE'

Next, what is the cause of this 'dis-EASE'—this world Dukkha?

The Effect must have a Cause; the Effect, so to speak, is cause; in another form. So let us seek the Cause in the Effect. Misery masked or misery manifest, whatever be its form, pleasant or painful, is traceable to one Root—Craving. Desire to unite with things we love, or separate from things we hate means sorrow. Some Crave for riches, some for relations and friends, some for other material forms and some for fame, and all these cravings ultimately lead to misery. So Craving is the Cause of All Misery, all Dukkha.

Next, How to kill Misery? To kill effect one must kill Cause; therefore to kill misery, we must kill craving or ignorance. It is the logical conclusion.

Further, How to kill craving? And here the Lord points out in this Fourth Great Truth, the Noble Eightfold Path. It consists of eight steps, to be trodden simultaneously on our journey towards Truth and Nibbbāna.

To start with, one must have RIGHT KNOWLEDGE or Right Views or Right Angle of Vision. It is the Right belief that forms the right foundation, and we well know, what Right Knowledge means in Buddhism ; it is knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, the Law of Cause and Effect and the Law of Opposites. All that is reasonable is also Right Knowledge ; therefore Buddhism teaches us to be reasonable. It also teaches us to perceive at the same time incessant change, principles eternally real and to "see naked facts behind the garments of hypothesis, obscuring Truth".

Right Knowledge builds Right Thoughts and aspirations—Thoughts of loving-kindness and renunciation of sense pleasures and thoughts aspiring to reach the Peace beyond. "All that we are is the result of what we have thought : it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts", this is the opening verse of Dhammapada. True, indeed ! Out of thoughts grow Actions. One who thinks wrongly, will naturally also speak wrongly and act wrongly; one who thinks rightly, has also Right Speech and Right Action or conduct. The follower of Buddha, in his speech, is truthful, and abstains from harsh, idle, backbiting and false words : in his actions, he abstains from taking life, stealing, immoral sexual indulgence, and indulgence in intoxicants. He takes to a Right Mode of Gaining his Livelihood and serves his family and himself without bringing injury to his fellow beings. He abstains from slave-dealing, selling poisons, intoxicants, animal flesh and murderous weapons. Right Livelihood is rarely a Rich Livelihood. We see people making fortunes, but a little of right vision or a peep into their Kammic back-ground, will tell us that, beyond the veil of their palaces and pelf, name and fame, lie wailing widows and orphans, starving people and broken hearts, moaning minds and silent curses, in brief tears and sorrow". They are wealthy in gold, but poor in Honour and Virtue. Wealth, especially when ill-gotten, in the end fails, only Virtue abides.

The practice of the above five steps helps one to cultivate altruistic tendencies and frees one from racial, national and provincial boundaries. All this prepares the field for the sixth step, namely Right Efforts or Exertions. Exertion can only be Right, if it is backed by Right Knowledge and Right Thought. A well-intentioned fool is worse than a devil. Right Knowledge and Right Aspirations make us anxious to do Right Deeds. That is an external aspect and is included in the fourth step. Here the sixth step carries us deeper and signifies an Introspective Ideal. By Introspective Effort, we cultivate a will to destroy evil thoughts already risen, to suppress evil thoughts not yet risen, to expand and increase good thoughts already risen and to produce good thoughts not yet risen.

Further, the Path directs us to cultivate Right Mindedness and Memory. 'Forget the wrong done to you and cherish the kindness shown to you', is a good maxim and helps one to be calm. This step also teaches us, before we go to the Final Step, mentally to analyse the body, understand its components, and keep in mind the Five Psychical hindrances and the seven Principles of Enlightenment. It also signifies 'constant watching of our thoughts, lest evil creep in unawares'. Right Memory may further mean, memory of remote past lives. It is said that by the time this step is perfected, such a memory can be acquired. By now the disciple becomes a teacher: he uses his energy-physical and mental—without the least dissipation. He understands things in their actual perspective: "He sees how beings disappear and re-appear, why they are bad or good, beautiful or ugly, fortunate or otherwise ; in brief he sees how beings come here according to their deeds". Majjhima Nikāya.

Finally we come to the topmost rung of the Eight-stepped ladder—Right Concentration or Meditation, from which Nibbāna is a single step. In this stage our thoughts do not wander. The energy is mustered and converged to a focus at any problem and one is sure to be enlightened. Deep ecstasy of knowledge shall come to him who ever strives to meditate in wisdom and in love. We know the blissful pleasure we feel when we solve a problem by intense mental application. What bliss it will be when we solve the problems of Life once for all by Right Meditation. Right Concentration leads from Bliss to Bliss, from Jhāna to Jhāna, till the Bliss knows no bounds and merges into Infinitude.—Nibbāna.

From what has been said above, it can be made out that the Path is a graded chart for self-culture, in which the following four stages are evident :—

1. Sīla—Moral Purity in Action,
2. Samādhi—Concentration,
3. Paññā—True Knowledge,

and 4. Vipassanā—Insight.

Without Sīla, Samādhi is impossible ; without Samādhi, Paññā is impossible and without Paññā, Vipassanā is impossible. Samādhi is the bridge that connects the physical to the mental and leads to the supramental. Sīla (moral purity) is the first essential on the Path to Liberation. Success in Sīla is an invitation to Samādhi : Success in Samādhi means Paññā which bestows Vipassanā.

Here it should also be understood that the sequence of Sīla, Samādhi and Paññā does not signify that Sīla should be perfected to the absolute level before Samādhi could be practiced or that Samādhi should be absolutely perfected before any grade of Paññā could be acquired. No. A degree of Sīla leads to a degree of Samādhi which in its turn gives the corresponding degree of Paññā. The Paññā bestows Vipassanā which enlightens Sīla. Then, Sīla starting from a higher level, leads to Samādhi of a higher type and which bestows Paññā of a better grade. Thus Sīla, Samādhi and Paññā go on progressing in a spiral, higher and higher till all these converge into UNITY and bloom into Nibbānic Bliss.

Lord Buddha solved all the problems of this world by Meditation. He discovered the world to be 'Dukkha', pure and simple, and showed the Path out of Misery. His Memory also was not limited: He gained memory of His entire remote past, of all His previous births in detail. To know it, we have only to refer to the Jātaka stories. He found the world to be a Repetition of Dukkha and enunciated the Path leading out from this miserable and meaningless repetition.

From the Buddhist point of view, life is a Journey—journey from Dukkha (sorrow) to Sukkha (joy), from bonds of Avijjā (ignorance) to joys of Nibbānic liberation. Just as an accurate clock, correct knowledge of the location of railway stations and functional utility of train, are useful to guide us to catch the train, so is Right knowledge essential to guide us to the station of Dhamma just as the possession of a proper railway ticket entitles us to start our journey, so it is Right Aspiration, that can put us on the Path: but, as mere possession of the ticket, our presence at the station, our desire to take up the journey and our cordial relations with the railway authorities, are not sufficient to ambulate us to our destination, for we must, to reach our goal USE the ticket and enter the actual journey, so mere aspiration for good without actual corresponding acting, remains merely a pious wish. Lord Buddha proclaimed that the Path is not meant merely for pious belief : to be of service it must be put into practice. Indeed, the Eight-fold Path is one of Self-conquest—a Grand Ladder that leads us step by step from the mire of this world to the glorious blissful heights of Nibbāna. It is a Map of Virtue. Mere possession of this Map, good though it be, does not make one a real Buddhist : theological controversies do not help us beyond evaluating this Map. What is wanted is Practice. This Map is Truth, and this Truth to be attained is to be absolutely realised and that by oneself alone. Lord Buddha points us to the Path. It is His best Prescription—the Master-Prescription. We have to follow it or leave it, it all lies with us—follow it and gain Nibbāna ; leave it and be trodden in the mire of misery. Even He by His virtues cannot save us from the fruits of our deeds. For evil done we have to suffer ; for good done we shall be rewarded ; there is absolute impartial Justice. We have to tread the Path to gain the Light. Prince Siddhartha trod this Path and became Lord Buddha and, anybody who treads it, can attain Nibbāna.

Noble are the Four Great Truths : Noble is the Eightford Path. Out of these Sublime Truths He evolved a remarkable Code of Ethics and Morality, which forms the practical side of His Great Philosophy, and it is here that we worldly folk must look for practical guidance. That code is Pañcasīla, the Five Precepts. It enjoins us, not to kill or steal, to be chaste, control our tongues and avoid intoxicants. This code is simple, but its beauty shines only by practice. It is a code that has astonished the world for it cannot understand how this Dhamma, without God or Soul, can reach such a sublime height of Ethical Morality. It is a code charming and enduring, and its Light is reflected in all the Moral and Social Movements of the World.

Not only that. This code, though forming only a part of Buddhism, is yet so sublime in its potentialities that it can solve effectively all the Social and Political complications of this Globe—complex, intricate and puzzling though they are. It behoves us to understand the implications underlying this Royal code. Let us try it.

'Kill not', is a simple precept, but it signifies volumes of Truth. It is a grand royal proclamation, that declares Universal Vegetarianism, "abolishes not only the brutalities of the slaughter-house, but also the necessity for maintaining a class of men in an inhuman profession, which panders to the appetites of the civilised classes, who would themselves recoil in horror from that slaughtering of animals, that they are so careless of delegating to less fortunate men." It also abolishes hunting and killing for fun, folly, pastime or sacrifice ; abolishes capital punishment, which is a vestige of barbarian days ; puts a stop to War by subtituting rational arbitration in its place and sneers at suicide.

One great thinker of Europe said, long before the last great war, "Meat-eating Europe of to-day will lead to Man-eating Europe of to-morrow." We have realised the truth of the prediction.

Meat-eating is a curse. In it are the seeds of cruelty and selfishness. Those seeds flower into manifestation, when distrust and greed lead one nation against another in war.

Every one of us is potentially a Buddha. Meat-eating prevents man from realising latent Buddhahood in him. Not only do we become cruel and kill the animals, but we also kill the golden opportunities that are showered on us to develop Buddhahood in us. To kill is bad, we should also understand that to eat meat is to encourage killing. To kill with one's own hand, or to employ another to do so ,is still the same .

What a pity ; Our Laws : A man kills a man and is said to have committed a murder, a crime, a terrible crime ; a man kills an animal, he is lightly thought of as having committed an offence ; not that alone, he can even get a license to slaughter. To kill men is murder : to kill animals is slaughter. It is not a mere play of words, as we may think. The law can tell us what each means in legal awards. This is so, for to man, his interest is primary and supreme and all else is secondary.

We yearn for peace, personal, social national and international—indeed a noble ideal for mankind to strive after. But, is it possible as long as our actions contradict our ideals? As long as we continue waging a relentless perpetual war—organised and brutal—against our innocent dumb fellow-creatures, for food, fun or folly, how can we be said to have learnt the lessons of fellow-feelings and loving-kindness, so very essential to realise our aims of peace in our midst. It should be realised that there exists a profound relationship between the diet we eat and the mentality that we possess or acquire. A cruel diet breeds cruelty in our thoughts and manifests, sooner or later, cruelty in our actions.

We have to humbly admit, that, with all our pride of culture and civilisation, we are as a whole not much evolved beyond the animal stage. However, it is a matter of gratification that the rude shocks of wars and all-round misery are slowly drifting us to the understanding, that without feelings of universal love there can be no peace on earth. Buddhism teaches us unlimited compassion and unselfishness—compassion that knows no boundaries of race, nation or species, compassion that is all embracing and universal. Let us pay homage to the grand Vision of Compassion, the Mercy Vision of loving kindness and universal metta of the Lord, which he extended not only to mankind but to the entire sentient world .

Next, the precept 'Steal not' is another storehouse of practical Truth. Gross theft is only one aspect of stealing. Mean exploitation—individual or national—, withholding another's share, buisness dishonesty and all such things come under this head .

Further, morality is the need of the day. Sexual jealousies and crimes form a good deal of the 'the fire' in this world. Indeed 'like fire sex is a good servant but a bad master.' Sensuality has been rightly called one of the greatest incompatibilities of spiritual progress.

The next precept not only teaches us not to lie, but also advises us to avoid flattery, hypocrisy, calumny, harsh words and idle talk.

The last precept deals with intoxicants which lead to loss of name, fame, wealth, sanity, health and perhaps life itself. The Lord warns us not only not to drink, but also to abstain from causing others to drink and sanctioning the acts of those who drink.

These are in brief the implications of this Grand Moral Code. Law courts, Jails, slaughter-houses, venereal hospitals and to some extent lunatic asylums are all an eloquent tribute to and demonstration of the lack of its practice. A study of Humanity's progress will tell us that all the evils that history records, from times immemorial to the present date, are the outcome of the practical disregard of one or all of the Five Precepts.

Pañcasīla is a Path, of self-culture, ultimately leading to self-conquest. It is the minimum that Buddhism excepts from its votaries—upasakas and upasikas. Along with it can also be mentioned the importance of practicing 'the Ten Acts of Merit,*, the foremost of which is 'Dāna' or charity. 'Dāna' and 'sila' help us to move from selfishness to generosity and the practice of the Pañcasīla, and the 'Ten Acts of Merit' leads us to our cherished goal of Final Liberation. Further, perfection in the practice of the Pāramitas makes one a BUDDHA, the Perfectly Enlightened One.

Pañcasīla throws open to us the gates of the great university of Buddhist Culture. The Aim of Buddhism is complete liberation, once for all,—Nibbāna. That liberation is only possible after renunciation, which according to Buddhism, is the Highest Good that leads to Nibbāna. Worldly life necessarily creates and multiplies cravings, which create Kamma and thereby bondage. On the other hand renunciation minimises cravings and so hastens progress on the Path. It is Noble Pañcasīla, which paves the way for renunciation and opens the gateway to Nibbāna.

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* The "Ten Acts of Merit" which are the Positive Precepts of Buddhism are :—1. Charity, 2. Morality, 3. Meditation, 4. Allowing others to share one's good actions, 5. Feeling joy when others perform meritorious acts, 6. Serving others, 7. Paying respect to worthy people, 8. Expounding Truth to others, 9. Hearing the exposition of Truth and 10. Coming under the refuge of the Three Jewels of Buddhism namely, BUDDHA, DHAMMA and SANGHA.

† The Ten Pāramitas or Perfections are :—1. Charity, 2. Morality, 3. Detachment from lustful desires, 4. Wisdom, 5. Heroic exertion, 6. Patience, 7. Truthfulness, 8. Determination, 9. Universal loving kindness and 10. Equanimity. One has to gain perfection in these Pāramitas before one can gain the Light of Bodhi.

Nibbāna is the Highest Fruit, the ultimate goal to which a man can aspire. There lies nothing beyond it. In it are centred the aspirations and the noblest sentiments of the entire Buddhist world. What is its nature?

One school defines it as 'extinction of illusion and self': another school calls it 'attainment of Truth', and here we have to face apparently two divergent views. One contends that Nibbāna is NOTHING—a big cipher, a zero—and believes in complete annihilation, while the other school depicts it as a state of Absolute Bliss and tranquility, that knows no change, no pain, no birth and death. Although they apparently conflict, it is not hard to reconcile these definitions. If one understands that Nibbāna is a state, which we cannot imagine or compare with anything at our command, in our ordinary consciousness, then it is "the total obliteration of everything that goes to make up the physical man"—"a condition of total cessation of changes, of perfect rest, of absence of desire, illusion and sorrow."

Let me quote from the Book of Solemn Utterances:—

"There exists, O Brothers, a Realm wherein is neither Earth nor Water, neither Flame nor Air; nor the co-existence of Cognition and Non-cognition is there, not this World, nor another, neither Sun nor Moon. That, Brothers, I declare unto you is neither a Becoming nor yet a Passing away: not Life, nor Death, nor Birth; Unlocalised, Unchanging and Uncaused:—That is the End of Sorrow! NIBBANA."

It is an excellent definition: in it there exists the force of a positive assertion coupled with negation of changeful phenomena. To say 'Nibbāna is Nothing' is to mean that the best we can conceive of comes to nothing, when compared with it and to say it is 'All Bliss and Peace unbroken' is to admit of its absolute nature.

Whatever Nibbāna be, it is Infinite beyond comprehension—Infinite Nothing or Infinite Everything. In fact to call it 'nothing' or 'Absolute' in this sense, means the same thing. Lord Buddha tasted it and proclaimed it. It must be something. Truly, it is SOMETHING. The testimony of the Lord is "THERE EXISTS—NIBBĀNA". That settles the question. Nibbāna is a matter for self-realisation and not a field for idle speculation. Words are a poor vehicle of the ultra-sublime conception it enshrines: evaluation of it by sensual perception or ideations, limited by boundaries, is impossible. It is therefore that to define Nibbāna in positive terms is not possible: in fact to define it means to defy it. That is why Lord Buddha kept a noble silence on this aspect of the Great Reality.

So far we have dealt with the Dhamma of Lord Buddha. The Sangha is the glorious Order of Monks, who renouncing the world, follow the 'Dhammapada' (The Path of Virtue) to gain Nibbāna. To complete the Buddhist Trinity, let us review briefly the life of the Lord Buddha, from whose mastermind and efforts proceeded all this system of thought. Prince Siddartha sacrificing a life of luxury and joy, leaves the palace, prospects of a throne, his near and dear ones, and sets out in search of Truth, which should liberate men from old age, disease and death. He had found that in the worldly life of luxury lies not the seed of liberation, and later his personal experience taught him that it is vain to expect liberation by ascetic practices, which he exhausted to the extreme before he gave them up. He took to the MIDDLE PATH, and one Great Night—great for him and great for humanity—while meditating under the Bodhi Tree at Buddha Gaya, he passed from Jhāna to Jhāna and met Truth face to face. That He crystalised in His glorious Dhamma, and even though He entered Parinibbāna at His death, His voice, His Dhamma, still lives and shines.

The doctrine of the Buddha, as much Rational as full of Practical Virtue and Real Hope, in virtue of its very Simplicity based on facts, depth based on Wisdom, Toleration rooted in benevolent lovingkindness, and all-embracing sympathetic Call, obliterating artificial divisions of caste, wealth and social status, was destined to evoke universal response wherever it was preached. The intrinsic worth of the doctrine and its extrinsic potentialities of service made an appeal that echoed far beyond the boundaries of India and far beyond the times it was preached. It was the inspiration of the great Dhamma that made a great monarch like Asoka, of whom Wells rightly says, "Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs, that crowd the columns of history, their majesties, graciousnesses and serenities and royal highnesses and the like, the name of Asoka shines, and shines alone, a star."

Missionary zeal spread the doctrine of Buddha, not only to the island of Ceylon, but also to other independent kingdoms all around—to China and Tibet in the North, to lands near and in the great oceans of the Far East and South, and even to the kingdoms of Syria, Macedonia, Egypt etc. in the West. The Light of the Dhamma, wherever it went, succeeded in raising the ethico-moral tone of the people: it stimulated learning, arts and sciences, and so became the basis of numberless cultures and civilisations.

We can well see that Buddhism is a Great Religion. But, let us clear our minds of any misconceptions by saying, that Buddhism is not a mere Religion. Indeed, to call it so, is to belittle and disparage it. We may well ask, then, what is it? IT IS DHAMMA. There is a sharp distinction between Dhamma and Religion. Though in actual practice one is complimentary to the other, in reality they differ. Dhamma is Truth and Glory, while Religion is a compromise of Time and Place, with Truth. Religion is gold tarnished by history and geography, by superstition and overzeal. Dhamma is inviolate, absolute and unchangeable; while Religion is a local manifestation designed to serve, more or less, a local purpose and is subject to degeneration, Buddha's doctrine is *Dhamma par excellence,* for the great Lord met Truth face to face and enunciated it. Truth is the central pivot of Liberation, and Dhamma is the nearest way of viewing it. Buddha-Dhamma is a unique way of looking at Truth at close quarters, but we must not think that the doctrine given by Buddha is the Whole Fountain of Truth in detail. Let us understand that it is a general view of the Whole with a Special view of a Part. Even Lord Buddha once said to His disciples that the knowledge imparted to them was much less than the knowledge not imparted. The knowledge given was, however, more than sufficient to attain to the highest goal, Nibbāna. Such is the glory of this Dhamma.

Having dealt with Buddhism in brief we may now be asked:

What Contribution has Buddhism made to the good of the World?

Apart from rendering the grand service of enunciating first-hand knowledge of Truth in a very profound and practical way, Buddhism has been a great positive force. It, by inspiring rationalistic attitude, breadth of goodwill, depth of knowledge, freedom from dogma, spirit of self-reliance, attitude of tolerant understanding, love of charity and vision of compassion, has not only relieved man from the oppression of meaningless 'fear' and revengeful gods, but has also bestowed on him a rich expanse of a life, full of glory here and hereafter.

Buddhism is a Religion of Freedom. Under it man is free and so is woman. Burmese women enjoy many rights, which even their most advanced European sisters have begun to envy and clamour for. They have actually shown by their example that the question of feminine inferiority is a mere artificial restriction and that in every walk of life, no matter what, business, domestic, social or professional, the fair sex is not only not the weaker sex, but can also push on, shoulder to shoulder, with the other sex.

Buddhism is also a Religion which cultivates delicacy of taste and appreciation of art. Beautiful Pagodas and sculptured monuments bear witness to this taste. Moreover, the stimulating influence, which this Dhamma exercised over the development of Arts and Sciences, the peace and happiness of mankind, cannot be set aside. To have a glimpse of what this Dhamma can do, one has simply to study that period in the history of India, which goes by the name of 'The Golden Period'. Under the great Emperor Asoka, Arts, Sciences, Learning and Scholarship flourished ; Hospitals were established for human beings and for animals, and Virtue, Peace, Prosperity and Happiness reigned. What has been, can be again, if the will exists to do.

Before one concludes, it is worthwhile to point out, what contribution Buddhism can make to solve the present-day world complications and what it can do to promote the future good of the world *i.e.* What is the value of Buddhism to the world—present and future?

"All things" declared Lord Buddha in the Fire Sermon, "are on fire, and wherewithal are they on fire? With the fire of craving, hate and delusion." The Fire that Lord Buddha spoke of twenty-five centuries ago, is still more fiercely burning today. The world is ablaze with fire. The fire of craving, hatred and delusion is manifest everywhere. The World war was a terrible example of this Fire. Individual and collective materialism, universal international distrust, the petty jealousies of European nations, the Sino-Japanese tension, the gold mania, war debts, the development of the art of selfish exploitation, misuse of science, the horrible increase in the art of destruction, the complex question of armaments, and to crown all, forebodings of another World war with the help of poisonous gases and disease germs, all these are chapters in glorification of the Fire which Modern Civilisation exhales in every breath.

If we cast a glance at the world affairs of the present day, we shall not take long to see and hence to pronounce, that Modern Civilisation is in a perilous condition. It is also clear, that modern enlightenment has failed miserably to calm the basest passions in the hearts of men. If right efforts are not made in time, collapse is inevitable, this is clear.

Modern Civilisation has developed Modern Science and has become an easy prey to it. Science is a double-

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[*] The anticipation has been fulfilled. We are already now in the midst of second world war, April 1941.

edged sword! It is a Friend of Construction today and the ally of Destruction tomorrow. 'It can help, it can destroy, everything depends on the way it is manipulated. Science has no will of its own. To do it credit, let us grant that Science itself is a noble thing, but, as it has no will of its own, we can only see its effects through the glasses of a Civilisation in whose clutches it happens to be. It can do good and it can do bad, all depends upon its Mother Civilisation. In fact it is a vicious circle in which we are sooner or later involved, in virtue of the human mind to be evil and selfish.

Let us view the whole matter in another way. Science is a child of Civilisation—a child which being a solitary one, has become necessarily spoiled. The Mother has reached a stage which forbids further freedom to this spoilt child. Either the child is to be allowed to persecute the mother which action has already potentially begun, or the Mother has, in Her own and the Child's interest, to adopt an elderly Daughter, a sister playmate to modify the ways of this Child. That Playmate is Religion. The Buddha Dhamma is perhaps best suited to be that Playmate, for it, in virtue of its being psychologically scientific and perfectly reasonable, has a peculiar fascination for the Western scientific mind.

Let us here quote, in extenso, a forceful writer who more than thirty years ago said, :—"Great, indeed has been the boon that modern science . . . has conferred upon the world. It has immeasurably improved our knowledge of the world about us, it has created a system of commerce and communication unparalleled in the history of mankind; its governments in their internal administration are a vast advance on those of ancient days ; its justice is to a great extent beyond corruption ; its capacity for co-operation and organisation beyond cavil. But, with these great virtues, these things that have made it great, has there come increase of happiness to the masses of the people? That is the Great Question on the answer to which a civilisation must be judged." The answer we believe is 'NO', a definite 'No'.

Further he says: "The energies of Western Civilisation have been turned in a direction from which no final satisfacton can be gained." . . "True happiness depends not upon the multiplication of material possessions, but on the culture of the higher faculties of the mind."

In fact modern civilisation and its science have been mostly external in their search, the horizon of which widens as new truths are discovered. The circumference goes on widening without a final stage of satisfaction. As scientific discoveries catered to sensual gratification, the satisfaction therefrom could never be complete, each gratification further flared the fire of craving. Moreover we see, correlation of the discovered facts is lacking in terms of Universal Good. Introspection can correlate the discoveries of Science in terms of Ultimate Good. Science is the product of outward observation while Dhamma is that of the Introspection. Dhamma is a brake that can regulate or nullify the mischievous tendencies of Modern Science. Western or Modern Civilisation is desperately in need of such a modifying Force.

Here also we cannot help quoting the forceful words of the same writer who says, "There is need in the West today of a Religion, which shall contain, in the highest degree, a philosophy, a system of ontology, founded on Reason rather than upon Belief ; a Religion containing the clearest possible enunciation of ethical principles ; a Religion which shall be devoid of those animistic speculations which have brought about the downfall of the hereditary faiths of the West, devoid of belief in all that is opposed to reason—a Religion which shall proclaim the Reign of Law, alike in the World of Matter and in the World of Mind.

"Such a Religion exists—a Religion unparalled in the purity of its ethical teaching, unapproached in the sublimity of its higher doctrine ; a Religion which, more than any other in the world, has served to civilise, to uplift, to elevate, to promote the happiness of mankind ; a Religon whose proudest boast is, that its altars are unstained by one drop of human blood ;—the Religion of the law of Truth proclaimed by the Great Sage of India, the knowledge and the practice of which has brought peace into the lives of innumerable men. Tested by the lapse of twenty-five centuries, by the lives of eighty generations of men, that Religion is yet the solace and the hope of a third of humanity ; it has been the Faith of forgotten ages, it is today the greatest of the World-Religons: it will be the Faith of the Future in that far distant time, when all mankind, conquered by the love it teaches, enlightened by the Truth it holds, shall dwell at last in harmony, in self-restraint, in mutual forbearance: shall attain at last to a true civilisation ; to a happiness beyond our hopes, who live but in the childhood of humanity, to a knowledge far beyond our deeming, as the stars beyond our earth-lit lamps ; in that day when the Flower of our Humanity shall have blossomed in the Light to come, filling all the earth with yet unmanifested glory, —suffusing all the hearts of men with the perfume of its utter Peace, ..."

That is the Great Message which Buddhism holds out to the World. Hyperbolical though it may look, it is still full of truth. Buddhism is all-beautiful: it is charming in the beginning, pleasing in the middle and enduring in the end ; it is rational to start with, virtuous to practice and full of hope in the end. Science is blind without Dhamma, and Dhamma is Light that gives Sight—Sight, wherein selfish, local and personal motives all melt away into the great question of universal good. Science therefore, to be useful, must be inspired by Dhamma ; both combined can guide the world to happiness, prosperity and peace. This is the Message which Buddhism proclaims to the war-ridden deluded world—a Message of the East to the West—a Message of Life and Light, of Universal Mettā and Lovingkindness.

Buddhism has proclaimed its Message and the world has, sooner or later, to accept it. Let us see what contribution we as individuals can make for the good of the world. Perhaps our best contribution is a noble personality. Charity begins at home, and to better the world let us better ourselves. Every individual is a centre of which this whole universe is the environment. Mere practice of the Pañcasīla can greatly help. If individuals practice the precepts in a true spirit, this globe, so unhappy now, will soon vibrate with glory and Peace.

This finishes in brief, "My Conception of Buddhism". Whatever mistakes be in it, belong to me ; whatever good it contains belongs to Buddhism. For our mistakes we cannot blame Buddhism. This paper will be a sort of review for those who are already Buddhists, a sort of Introduction for those who want to know something about this Great Dhamma. Those desirous of knowing something more and drinking deeply at the Fountain of Knowledge can refer to the Tipitaka, the Three Baskets of Buddhist Knowledge.

In Conclusion, let us say :—

Buddhism is Truth and Light that tells us that existence is begotten of Ignorance—Grand Ignorance—and that Ignorance begets Craving, Craving begets Kamma, Kamma begets Cycles of births and deaths, which are meaningless repetitions. This repetition goes on ad infinitum, if it is not put to an end by Right Knowledge, which kills Ignorance—the universal cause. The Four Truths form that Knowledge, and Lord Buddha was the Realiser of them. Let us all go to Him for Light and Guidance.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

DISCUSSION FOLLOWING THE PAPER ON

"MY CONCEPTION OF BUDDHISM."

Note :—The following answers are given in accordance with the Buddhist point of view.

Q. 1. Is meat-eating a sin?

Ans. I do not know what you exactly mean by the term 'sin'. I know what is VIRTUE and NOT-VIRTUE. So let me answer your question by putting to you another question. Do you sincerely think and believe that meat-eating is a VIRTUE? To me the noble precept loses all its worth, if 'kill not' does not imply 'eat no flesh'.

Q. 2. It appears that you attach too much importance to one precept. You know that we have five precepts. Out of these if we fail to practice one—*i.e.*, the First one—and so take meat, do you think that we are going to be put into Hell for that?

Ans. You realise that meat-eating is not a virtue and that it is an evil. In other words it is a bad Kamma. It adds another bad deed to your record. But, along with this all, we must also realise that for one bad deed, the results of our good deeds in other directions and of many kinds, are not going to be confiscated. For the good that we sow, we reap good, and for bad, we get bad ; and individually so. Apart from this, meat-eating is a hindrance in the Path of Nibbāna, for it gives us a chance to multiply our cravings: in other words it adds a bit of fuel to the fire.

Q. 3. Is it true for everybody—layman and monk?

Ans. No. It is true only for those who are worldly folk and who are living in the midst of temptations which add to cravings. To them meat-eating is a hindrance, for they are free to decide and buy what they think best, and if they decide for meat, knowing that it is not a virtue to eat it, they show themselves to be slaves of the craving.

Monks are higher people, who renounce the world and have no earthly possessions. They depend on what they get. They do not crave for meat nor do they ask for it. They eat what is offered, and it is not their fault if you give them meat to eat. You, knowing that meat-eating is not a virtue, take it yourself and also give it to Phongyis (*i.e.*, Buddhist monks in Burma), and so you complicate your bad Kamma. Monks are beyond our scope and limitations. To them all is nothing, even you and I are nothing to them, even their body is anatta to them. So to them, all that is seen is the outcome of craving and as such it is nothing. What then is left for them to differentiate in food? They eat simply to live and do not live to eat. So they are exempt from this limitation, and it does not hinder them from attaining Nibbāna. They are, however, free to preach that meat-eating is not a virtue.

Q. 4. Can a man of one religion take birth in another religion?

Ans. This is a very sensible question. My answer is YES, by all means, it is possible. Religion which is our own creation, is an artificial division. The real thing is Dhamma, which is Truth and so is one. The Laws of Universal Truth are one and so are their operations. When a person dies, according to Buddhist view, all his Kamma, in an involuted form, darts out like a wireless message into infinite space. Wherever there is a receiver suitably turned to it, it is absorbed, evolved and later ejected at birth. This law knows no distinction of caste, creed, religion, race, animal or sex. Merit is the deciding factor. Just as during the Great War, wireless messages transmitted by Germans primarily for Germans, were received by other nations wherever there was a ready-tuned receiver, in the same way the death of a Hindu here may lead to the birth of a Muslim or Buddhist there. Law knows no distinction in its operation. Only Kamma counts.

Q. 5. If I had no cravings or Kamma left in my past life, why shoud I have bad inclinations now?

Ans. This question, clever though it may look, displays an utter ignorance of the Law of Kamma. If you had no stock of cravings and Kamma left in you, why should you be here now? You should be in Nibbāna. The fact that you are here, shows that some Kamma is left. If you still have bad inclinations, it shows that you have a stock of bad Kamma which must be neutralised.

Q. 6. Can you make the Law of Kamma a little more clear?

Ans. Yes. I can compare Kamma to an account in a Savings Bank. As long as the account is not opened, nothing happens. When the account is opened, it depends entirely on you either to increase or reduce it. Every deposit or withdrawal will influence the final balance. One day you may feel disgusted with keeping the account running and so may withdraw everything—principal and interest—and get your account cancelled. Having cancelled it, your account ceases. There was no account before you opened it: there is no account now when you closed it. You opened it, because you liked to open it *i.e.,* you craved to open it: you liked to close it now, for you no longer desired to continue it. Your desires or cravings are the deciding factors. This analogy of mine, simple as it is, helps us to solve many, though not all, problems associated with Kamma.

Whatever Kamma we make, is recorded and each deed individually, whether good or bad, is accountable i.e. to be rewarded or punished individually as the case may be. Mind is the physical storehouse wherein all Kammas lie, and the depth of mind is 'unfathomable except by a Buddha'. From this store, Kammas emerge singly or in groups and bear fruit. All Kammas do not, in fact cannot, bear fruit at the same time. Some bear fruit, some begin to bear, while others lie dormant perhaps waiting for opportunities of time and place.

We have to neutralise bad Kammas by good ones. If all bad ones are exhausted, good Kammas may remain to bear fruit, and, if in the meantime no addition occurs, when the due fruits of all our Kammas, good or bad, are exhausted, one becomes free, without cravings. When cravings cease, no more births are left. We take birth only as long as there is some account to our credit.

Suppose you begin with some good and some bad Kammas and then somehow you decide always to do good Kammas. The good and the bad that you have done, must bear fruit in time. Good and bad Kammas may, in part, mature simultaneously or one or the other may mature separately. Suppose a time arrives when the fruits of all bad Kammas are exhausted. Then what remains is the fruit of some good Kammas. Here, if you renounce the world, when the fruits of all the remaining good Kammas are exhausted, you gain Nibbāna. If you continue doing good actions, you will continue reaping good fruits in this or a subsequent life. You will no doubt be happy but not blissful. To gain boundless Peace you have to renounce and make no more Kamma i.e. put an end to the vicious circle. Once the state of Nibbāna is attained, Kamma ceases to bind, for craving—the Binding Force—is absent in that state. Then whatever actions, in thought word or deed, are done, are without attachment—without the Binding Force of cravings. Those actions do not constitute Kamma.

Now, suppose you have done no wrong and have done only good. Of course you have not attained to the state of Nibbāna. If, somehow or other, environments tempt you, and you fall into evil, you will once more be in the mire. To avoid such a happening one requires constant watchfulness.

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* The Law of Kamma is very ably epitomised by the Venerable Anagarika B. Govinda in his Readership Lectures at the Patna University in the year 1936-7, in the following words :—

". . . . . The sankhāras, or mental tendencies which are conditioned by the illusion of self-hood ('Ego-ism) produce a consciousness (viññāṇa) and a psycho-physical organism (nāma-rūpa) which uses its senses (salāyatana) as instruments of craving (taṇhā). As far as this craving is satisfied it results in clinging (upādâna) to the objects of satisfaction. As far as it is not satisfied it results in an intensified longing (lobha) for such objects and in aversion (patigha, dosa) against the obstacles on the way towards its fulfilment. Thus lobha and dosa are only the two sides of the same force, *i.e.*, taṇhā and clinging—whether through greed or through hatred—is binding us ever

Q. 7. Are we all not slowly moving towards Nibbāna?

Ans. No. Some are moving slowly towards it: others are moving quickly: some are not moving at all, and some are rather moving away. It all depends on the Kamma to one's credit and the amount and quality of Kamma that one continues to make. If you make intensely good Kamma, you move quickly towards Nibbāna, and if you put in bad after bad Kamma, you may even revert to animal life.

Q. 8. What is Nibbāna? Is it Something or Nothing?

Ans. It is the most difficult question. A finite being like myself cannot describe or define 'Infinity'. The Bliss of Nibbāna is beyond my expression. Only those who have tasted it, can say something, but those who gain it, generally keep silent. We in our individualised consciousness which is limited, cannot conceive of anything beyond the limits of the senses, time and space, and so cannot exactly define Nibbāna. It is hard to define it: it is only to be realised. We can talk or define only in terms of relativity i.e., where there is some standard. Nibbāna surpasses anything that we can conceive of. Nothing

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anew to the cycle of existence. It is on account of our clinging to these forms of life that again and again we produce them. This is the law of Karma, namely the law of action. It is our will, our ardent desire which creates the world in which we live, and the organism which corresponds in it. Thus taṇhā, in the latent form of upādāna, conditions a continuous process of becoming (bhāva) in the direction of the desired forms of existence and in conformity to the individual's state of development and its inherent laws, according to which the incessant change of mental and bodily elements proceeds. This change either appears as birth and growth or death and decay, ..."

here is equal to that. So you may say it is nothing—better No-'thing'. But, 'NIBBĀNA IS'. That is the testimony of the All Enlightened One. Nibbāna is a State, not a Place. There we do not exist as I, you, we or he, but lose our individuality and become nothing in the sense of the individual Ego i.e. I, you or he-ness. You may also say it is Infinite, because beyond comprehension of individualised consciousness. One who has not realised Nibbāna, cannot in fact perfectly understand it, and one who has gained it, declares this universe to be nothing. When you think that a rope is a snake, do whatever you can, still for that moment you can never conceive that it is a rope. When you once learn it to be a rope, you cannot conceive it to be a snake. So while immersed in the field of relativity, we cannot conceive Nibbāna: once we conceive it, this world vanishes and we are no longer "we". We can conceive of things we see, things we taste, smell, hear or feel by touch or picture through the mind. Beyond this we cannot conceive. We know whatever we perceive with our senses is subject to incessant change, and CHANGE IS SORROW. We, as long as we are wedded to an ego, cannot get beyond things of sorrow. To conceive Nibbāna we have to renounce things of sorrow and go beyond relativity. Greed, hatred and ignorance are the seeds of sorrow. Annihilation of these tendencies leads to the state of 'paramam sukham', the Supreme Bliss, the Nibbana, after which there is neither birth nor pain. The meshes of Samsāra fail to catch one who has gained Nibbāna, the final liberation. The greatest glory of Nibbāna is said to lie in the fact that there can be no reincarnation after that. It is beyond Gods and men.

Q. 9. Can animals gain Nibbāna also?

Ans. From an evolutionary point of view, man is most suited to strive for Nibbāna. Whatever facilities be existing, for acquiring merit, in other forms of existence, i.e. the plant world, the animal world and the world of gods, the conditions prevailing in the 'world of man' are said to be optimum for making Kamma to gain Nibbāna.

We may take animals to be of two kinds:

1. Those passing through regular evolution,

and 2. Those of a retrograde type i.e. those which Buddhism believes to have been reverted from man to lower beings, in view of their bad Kamma.

The first group passes on a natural course. The second is restored to the status of man, when the punishment is over. I think animals cannot attain Nibbāna without becoming man, but there can be exceptions. The Buddhist view appears to be that every animal in the course of evolution is destined to become man and as man he has the best chance to work for Nibbāna.

This world is truth and untruth mixed together and evolution is an outcome of the truth trying hard to manifest itself. In this sense too, every animal is more or less moving towards Nibbāna.

Q. 10. If all gain Nibbāna, what about the world?

Ans. We need not be over-anxious about the world: we should be only anxious to gain the Truth. The world has been here so long ,how many have gained Nibbāna so far! Craving and temptations, all false and meaningless, are so alluring that the world allows few to be out of its clutches. Moreover it is impossible for the whole world to gain Nibbāna, for out of the vast and awfully fertile ocean of IGNORANCE creatures are being continuously added to the world. Entry into Samsāra is easy, but exit is for the very few. Were it even a theoretical possibility for all to gain Nibbāna, what would it matter? It would be a glorious day for the world and for Buddhism, for all would have gained their Ideal. The Ideal of all is Salvation or Nibbāna, and if it is gained, what more is there left to be gained. What is the use of grinding through this meaningless repetition of Dukkha? Let the world become extinct. Nibbāna is the aim, not perpetuation of this world: Sukha or bliss is the aim, not a continuation of Dukkha.

Q. 11. You have expounded Buddhist philosophy so well and appear to have grasped it well: should we understand that you are a Buddhist?

Ans. This is a question not in any way related to the subject matter of my paper, but though it is personal I am gladly prepared to answer it.

All are potentially Buddhas. A Buddha is one who realises Truth face to face. Truth is one, and all aim at it. The Buddhas Dhamma is an outcome of that Truth. The Lord has dealt with the practical aspect of Dhamma in an admirably scientific and systematic way. I admire it and practice it. I like it, for its practical beauty, more than any other Dhamma. It is, I think, the best enunciation of Truth. In this sense I am a strong and staunch Buddhist.

Q. 12. If a very evil-minded man renounces the world, but does no good actions, can he gain Nibbāna?

Ans. To renounce the world is itself a great good—the greatest good action. With that, one can neutralise a great deal of one's bad Kamma. When the fruits of our bad Kamma are exhausted and surely, if in the meantime nothing more is added, we can gain Nibbāna. If bad deeds are added, their fruits are to be endured, or if good actions are done their fruits are to be realised before Nibbāna is gained. It is a hard thing in practice for a bad man really to renounce the world. Usually, a bad man becomes a good man and then renounces.

Q. 13. Is Pagoda-visiting indispensable for gaining Nibbāna?

Ans. It is desirable and good, but for the highly evolved, it is not absolutely necessary. Pagoda-visiting may help, but it is not absolutely necessary for one's spiritual advancement. The real thing is merit, which depends on personal conduct—purity of thought, sweetness of speech and nobility of action. The pagoda may stimulate thinking and meditation, may afford Sammāsati or proper mental activity, and it may help to equalise social and economic differences. It may also inspire devotion and a stimulus to good actions or at least self-introspection. On the other hand, it may fossilise one's religion into statues, symbols and ritualism.

There are people whose appetite for sensual gratification is keen: their thoughts wander after dance, wine or women, and they cannot think in the right way. Repeated visits to some holy shrine or prolonged associations with some good sage, sometimes help to transform their conduct, and they begin to think well, speak sweetly and ask nobly—at first, for the time being, when under holy surroundings and later on as a matter of habit even. Thus begun, their spiritual advancement goes on, if the holy visits or associations are kept on with faithful regularity, till a stage in spiritual progress is arrived at, when no more objective stimuli in the form of images or pagodas are needed to keep the Light within shining. Once that Light of Truth is kindled, exoteric pagodas cease to be realities and the mind of man becomes the Seal of Truth—a Shrine unexcelled in spiritual glory. That Esoteric Pagoda is really indispensable for gaining Nibbāna. That

Dhamma-Pagoda in the heart of man, is neither concerned with speculative diversities which religions necessarily bring in various lands, nor with details of architectural designs which vary in various climes. That is the Central Light, without visiting which, Nibbāna is un-attainable.

Once that Light is kindled,
With Nibbāna we are mingled.

Q. 14. Is interimittent abstention good?

Ans. It is good but not the goal. It is however progress towards virtue.

Q. 15. When male and female germs have become a union-cell i.e. fertilised ovum, why can't they go on developing without the Kamma force?

Ans. Buddhism believes in the union of three factors, namely male cell, female ovum and Kamma force. The individual who is born is not the Mother-and-father-force alone. He is mother plus father plus his own Kamma force. Usually one does not remember one's past, and this forgetfulness may be 'a safeguard' on the part of Nature. Sometimes Nature fails, and we come across freaks of Nature, who are born with memory of a past life. Such news we at times come across in papers. In Lahore, the capital of Punjab, a man with such a memory went to visit his old house, only to find it deserted; in the United Provinces of India a girl was born who gave perfect details of her home in the preceding life; and in Burma we very well know the story of the Venerable boy-Phongyi of Dedaye who had not only the memory of his monastery in the previous life, but also remembered very well all the scriptures he had memorised. The birth of genius can only be explained on the basis of re-incarnation of Kamma. One brings one's Kamma with oneself, and the nature of that Kamma decides the house or parentage which supplies the physical material for that Kamma.

CHAPTER III

SCRIPTURAL WEALTH OF BUDDHIST INDIA AND ITS INFLUENCE ON NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES*

Though a vast treasury of literature—canonical books, commentaries, translations, and compilations—on the subject of Buddhism, is, at present available in Pāli, Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese, Burmese, Japanese, Sinhalese, English, German, Hindi and other languages, it is said that a great portion of the vast original Indian writings on the subject is mainly lost. One should not wonder if at places self-contradictory statements are found in such a vast literature—the product of different minds, tongues, times and climes. Whether we make out the intrinsic or extrinsic worth of a work or eliminate later exaggerations, interpolations, modifications or other errors, the original teachings of Lord Buddha serve as the common platform on which all schools of Buddhist thought are bound to meet.

It is said that soon after the Pari-Nibbāna of Lord Buddha, His disciples convened a great council at Rajagaha under Maha-Kassapa, to bring together all His teachings, and that the teachings which were in Pāli, the popular dialect, were arranged in three large groups, namely :—

(1) The Vinaya-Pitaka, i.e., Rules for the Sangha, the Holy Order of Monks.

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* Our article first published in the *Maha-Bodhi Journal*, Feb., 1941, Vol. 49, No. 2, pages 59-63.

(2) The Sutta-Pitaka, i.e., Discourses on the Dhamma and

(3) The Abhi-dhamma-Pitaka, i.e., Psycho-philosophy of Dhamma.

Hence the teachings collectively are called the Tipitaka or the Three Baskets of Wisdom.

The Dhamma continued to flourish for some time in India, but, within a century, another Council had to be called, this time at Vesāli, to settle certain differences which had crept into the Sangha. This second council under the presidency of Yasa, appears to have upheld the original doctrine. Although this Council sat for eight months, it failed to reconcile the views of the monks, and the dissentients held a separate council which they called the Great Council or the Mahā Sangiti. The unfortunate gulf thus created has never been bridged.

Later the Emperor Asoka, under whom Buddhism became a State religion and flourished greatly, noticed the differences of opinion prevailing in the Sangha on various doctrines and convened for the purpose of settling those differences a Third Council—at Pataliputra—under Tissa. Some 1000 monks participated in the proceedings which lasted for nine montss. So great was the missionary zeal of this extraordinary monarch, that, after the Council was over, missionaries were despatched in various directions to spread the word of the Buddha and thus bring peace to mankind. His own son Mahinda, followed a year later by his own daughter Sanghamitta, went to Ceylon and established Buddhism there. Not only were the Pāli scriptures introduced, but a branch of the sacred Bo-tree was planted at Anuradhapura where still it exists. In a similar way China, Eastern Asia and various lands west of India, as far as Egypt, are said to have been brought by him under the moral sway of India. The matchless Indian pioneers of this and slightly later periods, the courageous Buddhist missionaries, inspired by the nobility of their Dhamma, fired with the zeal for spreading Truth and serving humanity, undaunted by trackless forests they had to traverse, the high mountain barriers that stood before them or the surging waves of the unchartered oceans that they had to cross, suffering untold hardships at the hands of man and beast, wind and weather, accidents and disease ; renouncing all personal comforts, vowed to poverty and service, led by stern determination, full of compassion and wisdom, stirred by indomitable courage, carried the torch of Light and Culture from Buddhist India to distant lands over hills and beyond the seas. It as a matter of genuine pride (and in these days of degeneration, a matter of consolation) that the Light carried centuries back by these un-named torch-bearers from India though somewhat dimmed by history and time, is still shining in its new garb on these foreign soils. Buddhism flourished marvellously in India during that period and produced a really golden age. Unfortunately this glory soon became the object of jealousy, and Brahmins who had with the rising power of Buddhism lost their original sacred status, began to devise means whereby they could regain their supremacy. They did not take up arms, but they sharpened their minds and endeavoured to make the new faith a part of their creed. With centuries of peresvering effort they succeeded. The Fourth Council called by the Emperor Kanishka about the beginning of the Christian Era, was an important one, for it stands as an historical landmark between pure Buddhism and Brahman-Buddhism. Kanishka also sent missionaries to China, Mongolia and Tibet.

The first six or seven centuries of the Christian Era witnessed a period of great intellectual fervour in India. The Brahmins had sharpened their minds and were ready for any intellectual battle. They were bent either on defeating the Buddhists or absorbing them. The philosophical contest which ensued, stimulated the rise of great philosophers, scholars, writers, orators and preachers in both camps. As by this time Pāli, the language of the people at the time of the Lord Buddha and the official language of Buddhism, was losing ground, the Brahmins took this opportunity to restore Sanskrit. Sanskrit having become once again the scholar's language, the Buddhist scriptures were put into the crucible, and there came out Sanskritised versions and Brahminical modifications of the old teachings. Even the Buddha began to be accepted as an incarnation of God—the very anti-thesis of Buddhism. The natural result was that slowly the two great intellectual faiths got amalgamated and Sanskritised writings began to be viewed as quite authentic. Huge piles of literature must have been produced by Indian writers on Buddhist subjects at this time. Chinese pilgrims who visited India stood aghast and dazed at the wisdom of the Indian mind and the colossal literature on Buddhism available here. After staying several years as devoted students at the great university centres of culture and learning, they carried back with them copies of a large number of books, which, though they have been lost to India, are still available in part or fully in China and Tibet. The Buddhist universities of medieval India were really huge monasteries, where monks and students, indigenous and foreign, could peacefully busy themselves for years in studying the ancient wisdom, writing translations, making copies of precious scriptures or in producing original works of literary interest. Nalanda, Vikramasīlā, Jagaddala and Odantapuri were the most important of the centres of culture and these flourished admirably under royal patronage. The learned pandits of these universities proved excellent agents of Indian culture to China and Tibet to which places they went mostly under royal invitations and there translated and commented on the scriptures (mostly Sanskritised versions) in the new tongues with such literary dexterity and spiritual insight that their very writings became Buddhist scriptures in the new lands and their very names became objects of worship. Thus they added glory to the name of India.

It should not be forgotten that the culture exported from the centres of learning of medieval India was not a pure Buddhist commodity though its nucleus was undoubtedly Buddhistic. The culture was a synthetic product of Buddhist and Brahmin intellects. The ingenuity of the Brahmin intellect, which had through thousands of years preserved Indian philosophy, also succeeded through centuries of give and take in absorbing the intellectualism of Buddhism. Buddhism slowly merged into Brahminism and the result is what we now call Hinduism. Further, the great Buddhist monasteries with their huge libraries received a final blow from the Muslim invasion of India. Thus was lost even the label of Buddhism from the fair face of Arya-vartha. With the destruction of Monastic Universities, the veritable workshops of literary and spiritual pursuits, the Buddhist writings came to an end. For 800 years no Buddhist works were written in India. Only in recent years the Ven'ble Rahula Sankrityayana has made efforts to enrich India by bringing back from Tibet part of the literature that was lost to India and also by translating for the first time, in part, of the classical Pāli canon into Hindi.

Ceylon, Burma and Siam still possess the Pāli version of the scriptures which is probably in main the original doctrine or at least the doctrine as promulgated by Lord Buddha and expounded by His immediately succeeding Sangha, called the Tera-Vāda. It is also called Southern Buddhism in distinction to the Northern Buddhism in China, Tibet and Japan which is in fact the localised version of Sanskrit Brahminised Buddhism. The two big divisions have their separate canons which have similar sub-divisions. Though most of the literature through lack of intellectual foresight on the part of invaders and many other causes, has been lost, yet the size of the total literature can be imagined from the Pāli canon alone.

The following is a brief analysis of the Pāli canon :—

I. *Vinaya Piṭaka*—concerned with the rules of discipline governing the monks and nuns and is divided into three main divisions.

II. *The Sutta Piṭaka*—A collection of 5 sections (Nikāyas) of discourses namely :

(1) The Digha Nikāya, which has in all 34 long discourses subdivided into three sub-sections called Vaggas.

(2) The Majjhima Nikāya, a collection of medium-sized discourses 152 in all subdivided into 15 sub-sections.

(3) The Samyutta Nikāya or connected series of 56 discourses, grouped in 5 series.

(4) The Anguttara Nikāya or numerical grouping, consisting of a total of 2308 Suttas collected in 11 Nipātas.

(5) The Khuddaka Nikāya constitutes a set of 15 shorter but quite important books. The Dhammapada, Sutta Nipāta, the Theri and

Thera-gathā and the Jatakas belong to this group.

III. *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*—a collection of seven works of deep Psychological and philosophical interest. It is a Psycho-philosophical view and analysis of the Dhamma of the Suttas.

It should be understood that the above list does not constitute the whole of the Pāli Buddhist literature. In addition to the canon there is a large number of commentaries and exhaustive writings in Pāli by authors of classical interest, pre-eminent among them stands the name of Buddhaghosa, a man who did so much but whose life stands shrouded in mystery. According to one account he was a Brahmin living near the Bodhi-tree in India, and went to Ceylon to translate the Sinhalese commentaries into Māgadhi. According to another version, he was a Brahmin living in Suvarnabhumi (modern Thaton in Burma) the stronghold of the Talaings, and went to Ceylon about 400 A.D., to procure and translate scriptures on behalf of the king of the Talaings, Dhammapala by name, who gave great encouragement to religion. On the victorious return of the celebrated Arahant, the master-scholar Buddha-ghosa, the name of the land was changed from Suvarna-bhumi (lit: the Land of Gold) to that of Sudharma-bhumi (lit: the Land of Good Dhamma). The scholar-saint wrote over a dozen large works in addition to translating the Tipiṭaka, but his 'Visuddhimagga' (The Path of Purity) is very popular.

Burma and Ceylon have played quite important parts in preserving the Theravāda scriptures. The official introduction of Buddhism into Ceylon dates back to the period of Asoka, while the date of the introduction of Buddhism into Burma awaits research. It appears Burma received Buddhism from two sources, two varieties of

Buddhism from two routes. North Burma and the Shans in particular appear to have received Buddhism via China, while the Southern part of Modern Burma appears to have received Buddhism in a vague form very early from India. Even tradition has it that at the time of Lord Buddha some Indian priests came enroute to Burma and brought with them Buddhistic ideas. Though not denying the earlier Buddhistic contacts of India and Burma, facts point to the conclusion that Buddhaghosa was the first to introduce a complete copy of Theravada scriptures into Burma. Later, in the 12th century A.D. when Ceylon was over-run by ruthless invaders who destroyed all the scriptures there, it is said, it was Burma, which returned the debt of gratitude by supplying back copies of scriptures to Ceylon. For over 1500 years Burma has continued to be the sacred repository of Theravada scriptures, and the people of Burma no less than the Burmese kings, deserve the credit for maintaining the purity of the sacred writings. At Mandalay (the capital of Burma up till annexation) there is a huge collection of marble slabs on which are inscribed the whole Tipiṭaka. That is itself a standing monument of Burmese zeal for the Buddhist scriptures. Such a living interest alone could safeguard the purity of the Sacred Word throughout the centuries.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF UNDERSTANDING*

> "Hatred ceases not by hatred,
> Hatred ceases alone by love."—*Dhammapada.*

Thus Buddhism recognises that:—

1. Hatred should cease,
2. Hatred cannot cease by hatred, and that,
3. Hatred can only cease by Love.

Hatred is begotten of ignorance and ignorance cannot make ignorance cease. Love is begotten of wisdom and understanding, and it only can neutralise ignorance, the mother of hatred. Moreover, with the cessation of hatred comes more understanding and with that come wisdom and love, which beget real happiness. So sings the Dhammapada.

> "Happy is the Buddhist's fate,
> For his heart knows naught of hate.
> Haters may be all around,
> Yet in him no hate is found."

Buddha teaches you, not only to love those who love you, but even to love those who hate you. To love those who hate is not to encourage hatred, but is a means to engender further love. To love those who love you is to pay back what you owe: not to pay others what you owe them is bad Kamma. To love those who hate you is grand, for you contribute towards the eradication of the evil of hatred.

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* Our article which first appeared in the *Maha-Bodhi Journal*, March, 1939, and reprinted in *Buddhism in England*, May, 1939, is presented in revised form here.

But does not Buddhism teach to hate evil deeds, ignorance and the like? The answer is, *No*—although this seems to be a strange answer. Buddhism teaches no hatred whatsoever, for hatred of evil in time drifts to hatred of good. Buddhism only teaches *Understanding*. It teaches us to strive to understand evil and to escape through goodness. No religion however corrupted, no evil deed however vile, no man, however degraded, no animal however low, is to be hated. All these are to be viewed through understanding and improved and won through Love.

A man commits wrong. To condemn him is not the correct treatment, for it will not make him better—rather it may make him worse. The constituents of the wrong should be analysed, the circumstances under which he committed it should be understood, the causes found, their seeds located, and finally real efforts made to eradicate the source of the evil. Thus, in place of being hated, the evil-doer rather becomes an object of compassion—compassion for the sufferings he has to endure for the evil done—and efforts should be made not only to wean him from further evil, but to put him on a constructive Path and to render bearable the sufferings he has to undergo. The Buddhist attitude to vice is not a display of hatred towards the evil-doer, but an understanding of the evil, to offer compassion for its consequence and thus pity the evil-doer for his ignorance, and also to make efforts to enlighten him get him out of the vice in which already he is, and to steer him clear of the vices which have not yet ensnared him.

If a religion is corrupt, it is not good to disparage it, for to disparage it is to hate it. The religion which may appear rotten and corrupt should be understood through penetrating analysis—analysis of its constituents, analysis of the motive of its birth, its geography, its history and its promises of general weal, and if it is properly understood, the emergent reaction will be that of tolerant localisation and love rather than that of hatred and denunciation. If a religion stands much below the mark, it is not by hatred that it can be helped to come up to the mark: it is by understanding that it can be proved wrong and it is by love alone that it can be reformed and won over. If another's religion is viewed with the penetrating light of understanding and toleration, it may even happen that the religion which was considered low and evil, may turn out to be as having merely appeared so, at the end of the sympathetic analysis. Such an attitude not only leads to understanding and that understanding to toleration, but that toleration also leads to further understanding and further toleration, till the superficial controversies vanish into silence. Thus toleration in religious views leads to toleration and understanding in individual matters and better relations between man and man. Practice of hatred could ot lead one to such a glorious result—rather the gulf would have widened with its drastic consequences. India at present needs such a NOBLE UNDERSTANDING.

In the field of politics, the element hatred or its modified or marked bye-products, are generally considered essential, so much so that Dr. Johnson was led to define politics as 'the last resort of a scoundrel'. Dr. Johnson might have gone too far in his views, but the fact remains that masked hatred plays an important role in politics. In general practice, politics go so far in their enthusiasm that in denouncing the evil, the politician is led to hate and plan against the evil-doer, and in concentrating his affection on a circumscribed locality called motherland or fatherland, he not only displays indifference to lands of other people, but also is more often led to hate. It is indeed to the credit of Mahatma Gandhi that he, in his practical application of the noble doctrine of 'Ahimsa', has tried to weed hatred out of politics, but still in other lands politics are what they always were. A system of politics in which hatred—masked or manifest—plays an important part, cannot give birth to real prosperity. Real prosperity comes in only with the cessation of hatred. The noble example of Asoka, who bestowed prosperity on India by creating a noble understanding with all the neighbouring lands, stands as a supreme example for all time and should be the ideal for all nations.

In conclusion:—as with individuals, religions and politics, so with all other fields of human activities:—

"Hatred ceases not by hatred,
Hatred ceases alone by Love."

Hatred has no place in the Dhamma of Lord Buddha, for it has no place in the sublime purity of His mind. Out of mind spring all actions, and if mind is well balanced, it will be wisdom and love that will rule it and not hatred. Mind is the platform where all the physical activities are mentally rehearsed for the theatre of life and so one has to be ever alert to keep down the element of hatred there. Such a habit can only be acquired partly by education and partly by discipline.

India and the world at large need to imbibe the spirit of this "MANTRA" at this critical period in the history of the world, when hatred is horribly manifest everywhere. In cessation of hatred and the exhibition of mutual understanding are not only the solution of strained individual relations, but, along with many other things of glory, also the curse of Hindu-Muslim tension in India and the savage war-mania of the so-called civilised world at large.

WHAT BUDDHA DID FOR THE LAITY*

Buddhism is generally considered to be a religion enunciating principles of life, not meant for the worldly folk. That is a wrong notion. No doubt, Buddhism acclaims renunciation as the highest virtue, and so gives to the monks the place of preference, but it does not mean that worldly folk are absolutely ignored. They are also given the place they deserve.

Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha (Teacher, Truth and the Taught) constitute the Noble Trinity which comprises Buddhism proper and is said to be changeless in its constitution, because it is complete in itself, but the practical application of this Buddhism in the lives of worldly people is Buddhism in action, and it is the interpretation of this Buddhism which concerns worldly folk most.

At the very threshold it should be clearly understood that in Buddhism the object of life is first to understand what life actually means, next to find out what life should aim at and finally to strive to achieve that aim. At first it is essential to know and understand that life is Anicca, Dukkha and Anatta, *i.e.,* impermanent, sorrowful and unreal. Realising life to be this, one aims at Permanent Real Bliss and strives to attain it. To know life one must be for some time in touch with life, and it is there that one must learn that life is changeable, painful and unreal. Merely to know is not sufficient. These facts must be realised. Having really perceived that life is such, one cannot continue associating with worldly life for long, for a sense of dissatisfaction soon develops which ultimately leads to renunciation or the adoption of the life of a monk. In this sense, the worldly life is an important preparatory school for the greater University of Monastic life. Worldly life is a sorrow-joy complex, and the aim of this preparatory school is to understand the significance of the ingredients of this complex. Monastic life is the great laboratory where life is thoroughly analysed, traced to its origin and finally conquered. That is the relative significance of the life of a lay follower of the Lord and that of a monk.

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As worldly life is a sorrow-joy complex, with its waves of ebb and flow, it is essential, to make it work smoothly, that cultivation of virtue should form the main feature in personal culture. In other words, ethics and morality should be the features of worldly life, and worldly life should be considered not an end in itself, but a means to a higher end.

Lord Buddha did not despise worldly life. That He never did it, is clear from the fact that He often preached to the laity, and gladly responded to the invitations of the meanest of them. Barriers of caste or wealth never influenced Him. His criterion was virtue, and a man was to be judged by the amount of virtue which is to his credit. His Dhamma is the Gospel of Virtue, and is common to both the laity and the monks, but the code of discipline is stricter for the monks than for the laity. It cannot, therefore, be said that the laity are ignored : rather it is in the laity that the seeds of virtue are sown which are expected to blossom fully in monkhood.

The Five Precepts form an excellent code of ethics for every man or woman. Not only are people enjoined to follow them, but they should further understand that they should neither cause any one else to break them, nor approve of the acts of those who do break them. The Five Precepts framed for the laity testify to the pains Lord Buddha took for the benefit of worldly folk. This code—apparently negative—is, in reality, the storehouse of positive virtue, for the expulsion of vice prepares the ground for the development of virtue, which goes on increasing as one develops self-culture.

Self-sufficient as this code of ethics is to lead laymen to a virtuous life, it was further augmented by Lord Buddha. He narrated in details the duties expected to be performed by laymen in various worldly relations. The Sigālovāda Suttanta is an eloquent example. One morning, on seeing Sigala worshipping blindly the Six Quarters, Lord Buddha explained to him the real significance attached to that worship, and said:—

"Mother and father are the Eastern view,
And teachers are the quarters of the South.
And wife and children are the Western view,
And friends and kin the quarters to the North;
Servants and working folk nadir are,
And overhead the Brahmin and recluse.
These quarters should be worshipped by the man
Who fitly ranks as house-holder in his clan.
He that is wise, expert in virtuous ways,
Gentle and in this worship eloquent,
Humble and docile, he may honour win.
Active in rising, foe to laziness,
Unshaken in adversities, his life
Flawless, sagacious, he may honour win.
If he have winning ways, and maketh friends,
Makes welcome with kind words generous at heart,
Can give sage counsels and advice,
And guide his fellows, he may honour win.

The giving hand, the kindly speech, the life
Of service, impartiality to one
As to another, as the case demands :—
These be the things that make the world go round
As linchpin serves the rolling of the car."

—*S. B. B. Dialogues of the Buddha, Part 3, pp. 183-4.*

Lord Buddha has even given in details the duties which each individual and group should perform. They are as follows :—

THE EAST. I. PARENTS & CHILDREN

(A) The Lord advises parents to express their love and affection for their children in five ways, namely :

1. Restrain their children from vice,
2. Culture them in virtue,
3. Give them proper education and prepare them for some profession,
4. Arrange suitable marriages for them when they come of age,

& 5. Hand them their inheritance in due time.

(B) The five duties of children towards their parents are :

1. To support their parents as once they were supported by them,
2. To take on the family duties once performed by their parents,
3. To keep up, enhance, or if needed, restore the dignity of the family,
4. To endeavour to be worthy of their inheritance.

& 5. To honour their memory when they are gone (by charity and deeds of merit).

THE SOUTH. II. PUPILS & TEACHERS

(A) In five ways a pupil should honour his teachers, namely:

1. By showing them due respect,
2. By personal service to them,
3. By confidence in and eagerness to learn righteous advice from them,
4. By supplying their wants,
& 5. By respectful attention to their teachings.

(B) In five ways the teacher thus honoured should show his affection to his pupils, namely:

1. By training them to be good,
2. By teaching them to hold fast to good knowledge of proven worth,
3. By imparting thorough instructions in various branches of knowledge,
4. By speaking well of them to their associates,
& 5. By guarding them against danger from every quarter.

THE WEST. III. HUSBAND & WIFE.

(A) In five ways a husband can show his love to his wife, namely:

1. By treating her with respect,
2. By treating her with courtesy and kindness,
3. By moral faithfulness to her,
4. By giving her autonomy in domestic management,
& 5. By providing her with suitable adornments.

(B) The wife in return for the affection bestowed on her, should show her affection in the following five ways:

1. By managing the domestic affairs in an orderly and tidy way,

2. By being hospitable to relations and friends,
3. By being morally faithful,
4. By being a thrifty house-keeper and safeguarding the property in her care,

& 5. By performing all her duties with skill and diligence.

THE NORTH. IV. FRIENDS.

(A) In five ways a house-holder becomes a good and worthy friend, namely:

1. By being generous (*i.e.*, offering presents, etc.),
2. By being courteous (*i.e.*, in speech and actions),
3. By being benevolent (*i.e.*, helpful and kind),
4. By treating his friends in a way he would like to be treated by them,

& 5. By being as good as his word.

(B) In five ways the friend thus ministered to should show his regard for him, *viz.*—

1. Watching over him when he is off his guard,
2. By safeguarding his property when he is negligent,
3. By being a refuge to him in weak moments,
4. By not forsaking him in misfortunes,

& 5. By showing kind consideration to his family and descendants.

NADIR. V. MASTER AND EMPLOYEE

(A) In five ways does an *Ariyan Master* look to the welfare of his employees, *viz.*,—

1. By assigning them work proportionate to their physical and mental capacity,
2. By giving them suitable food and wages.

3. By looking after them in illness,
4. By sharing delicacies with them on occasions of feasts,
& 5. By allowing them leisure and granting them leave at times.

(B) Servants thus looked after by their master owe five duties to him, *viz.*—

1. To rise earlier than their master,
2. To retire late after he has gone to rest,
3. To feel contented with what they get,
4. To work cheerfully and conscientiously,
& 5. To desire his welfare and carry about his praise.

THE ZENITH. VI. LAITY & MONKS

(A) The virtuous man serves his spiritual teachers in five ways, *viz.*,—

1. By affectionate acts,
2. By affectionate words,
3. By affectionate thoughts,
4. By offering them a cordial welcome,
& 5. By supplying them their material needs.

(B) The spiritual masters respond to the good conduct of their disciples in six ways, *viz.*,—

1. By restraining their disciples from vice,
2. By stimulating them to virtue,
3. By showing loving kindness to them,
4. By imparting them spiritual knowledge not known to them,
1. By facilitating the practice of the knowledge they have.
& 6. Above all, by revealing to them the Path that leads to Blissful Heights.

The six quarters, it is clear, constitute the environment of the worldly man, and if he has to develop virtue in him, it is essential that he should be at peace with his surroundings. The ethics enunciated in the Suttanta comprise the duties and obligations owed by a man in the world, and provide valuable guidance for his dealings. Their practice ensures smooth sailing in the ship of virtue on the stormy ocean of life.

The Vyaggapajja Sutta is another storehouse of information for man in the world. Vyaggappajja, a layman, approached the Lord for advice as to how he should obtain not only worldly welfare but also happiness in the next life. The Lord very graciously gave him a discourse which is a unique contribution to the regulations for leading a happy layman's life. Lord Buddha advised Vyaggappajja to:

1. Let him *Show perseverance* in the performance of his legitimate duties, in whatever sphere of life he may be, high or low, and thereby gain success and acquire wealth.
2. Let him *Protect* his hard-earned wealth from thieves, enemies, loss from fire and water and from jealous relations.
3. Let him *Cultivate the company of righteous persons* and learn to be virtuous and spiritually minded, embracing all that is good and refraining from all that is evil.
4. Let him *Be moderate in spending money*, balancing income and expenditure, being neither too extravagant nor acting as a miser.

Further, in order to make His enquirer understand fully the means that lead to wealth and worldly prosperity, and the leakages which drain away wealth and lead to worldly misery, He narrated the remarkable parable of the Lake. A Lake, with four inlets and four outlets, when the inlets are blocked, slowly loses volumes of water whereas if the inlets be intact and the outlets blocked, the volume of water rises. Indulgence in illegitimate sexual acts, intoxicating drinks, gambling, and vicious society, are the four drains which dissipate wealth and destroy prosperity, whereas refraining from such acts leads to the conservation of wealth and increase of prosperity.

It appears that Lord Buddha fully realised the important role which wealth plays in worldly happiness, but He did not subordinate virtue to wealth. He showed how to acquire, maintain and spend wealth whilst practising virtue. Realising the importance of wealth for worldly prosperity, He stimulated worldly people to acquire it virtuously and to spend it properly. Thus He raised not only the moral tone of the people, but also developed in them a sense of attachment to virtue and non-attachment to material values. Wealth gives us happiness here: virtue promises happiness here and hereafter. He combined the two and thus showed the way whereby welfare here and hereafter may be ensured.

In the same Sutta mentioning how to attain better rebirth, He stresses four points, *viz.*—

1. Faith in the Noble teachings and self-confidence in the acquisition of virtue,
2. Practice of the Five Precepts,
3. A charitable disposition,
4. Cultivation of the wisdom which dispels Ignorance and leads to Enlightenment.

The Scriptures are replete with instances in which Lord Buddha gave good and sound advice to laymen, but what has been said above will suffice to show that, not only did He not ignore the interests of lay followers, but He laid down the duties and obligations devolving on people living the worldly life. He had quite an important place in His mind for the lay people, and it was out of compassion for them that He preached His glorious Dhamma to the world. It should also be made clear that the worldly life and the joy derived from that life are not the be-all and end-all of all progress. It is merely the First Step, though quite an important one. It is the great stepping-stone to higher excellence. Lord Buddha recognised this fact and therefore gave it the attention it deserved.

THE HOUSE OF MY BUDDHA*

Where should I look for the house of the Buddha?

In Kapilavatthu He spent the years of His childhood and youth, but there I see Him not; under the Sacred Bo-Tree He gained the Light, but there even He is not: and in the Viharas in which He preached, He is not.

Neither in Kapilavatthu nor under the Sacred Bodhi Tree is the house of my Lord Buddha. The great Kapilavatthu is lost; the royal palace of pleasure is gone; the sacred Bo-Tree is in alien hands: even the bricks of the great Vihāra of Anāthapiṇḍika where He spent years in preaching are no more.

Then, where; where to find the house of My Lord?

Not in bricks and mortar, not under leaves and wood, is the House of My Lord—Lord Buddha.

Yet He lives.
But, how?
Through His teachings.
But where?

In the hearts of pure people
In an innocent mind
Filled with love sweet and tender
In deeds fond and kind,
He lives and will live
For all ages and climes.
His House is of virtue
It stands for all times.

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* Our Poem first published in the *Maha-Bodhi*, Vol. 48, Nos. 5 & 6, p. 186 (May & June), 1940.

Through years long and stormy
Two thousand, hundred five
His House stands unshaken
With glory alive.
Strong castles may crumble
High structures decay
But the House of my Buddha
Stands for ever and aye.
His House is of virtue
Filled with pure glory,
Doors open to mercy,
Ever lovely, though hoary.
Bricks glitter with love
Joy joins them all tight
Walls painted with Truth
And all bright with light.
This House in the Heart
Is the shrine of all time,
There find we Buddha
In beauty sublime.
Other temples and shrines
May live or may fall
But, the House of my Buddha
Stands for ever and all.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

It must be clear that Buddhism, from what has been said in the foregoing pages, is a philosophy of an ethico-moral type that recognises the desirability of self-conquest. To accomplish this object, it offers a well-graded practical Path. No doubt, through historical vicissitudes, Buddhism has also taken the garb of Religion and in that capacity has rendered a great service to humanity, but still, if one with a clear vision penetrates the encrustations of time and place, and looks at the CENTRE, one will not fail to find that Self-conquest through ethico-moral discipline is still the essential feature of the Buddha's Dhamma. As such, distinctions of age, sex, social positions, caste, religion, nationality, race or even this globe, do not apply to it.

Any and every person is free to practice meritorious acts, and it is his PERSONAL MERIT that will count in assessing his value. It is the life of merit that counts and not the LABEL OF FAITH. Viewed thus, it may at times happen that one who proclaims himself a Buddhist, may fall short in merit as compared with one who, though stamped by birth with another label, loves meritorious deeds and does those for the mere love of them. In such a case that man is indeed a Buddha-putta, though only subconsciously so. The reaction of such a person to Lord Buddha and His Doctrine, if he even gets a little glimpse of Buddhism, will be one that can be best described as "love at first sight" ; the mere sight of Buddhism will convert him into an ardent Buddhist.

At present, though the majority of the human inhabitants of this globe are under the sunshine of the Buddha's Dhamma, it appears that a good majority of those yet outside its fold, are actually only apparently outside it. "Their eyes", as said Lord Buddha "are scarcely covered with dust". They are not what they are labelled. Every rational, diligent, moral, spiritual, persevering person is potentially a Buddhist. "His eyes are scarcely covered with dust." "That little dust" is the sacred duty of the missionary to remove.

Missionary work is highly meritorious. It is doubly blessed : it secures merit for one who does it ; it offers light to one who comes under it, but to be really meritorious, missionary work should not set before it as its object, the mercenary, numerical or the mechanical conversion spirit. The mercenary spirit kills merit ; mere numbers do not count ; replacing labels makes no difference. The real object of missionary work should be, by example and precept, to raise the moral tone of the people, and to stimulate them to rise to the heights of self-conquest. Whatever they be, stamped with whatever label of denomination, if a missionary succeeds in awakening in them a real practical sense of ethico-moral culture, he should think, even though the original tag is not cast off, that he has awakened Buddhism in them.

Buddhism teaches a life of intelligence and wisdom, and the object of Buddhist missionary work is to make the world wiser and spiritually happier and not merely to gloat over the volume of census returns or counting heads of herds. Buddhism is the Light of Bodhi, the Sight of Supreme Wisdom. Without Supreme Wisdom no Final Escape is possible. This sense of Supreme Wisdom is to be awakened if one wants to attain Blissful Glory. This is the aim of Buddhism and the awakening of such aspirations should be the test of Buddhist Missionary work.

A missionary, wherever he goes, is expected to leave a legacy of wisdom, virtue and joy. He is, in brief, a MOVING PAGODA. Even a lay man in his or her personal capacity can do much. Our acts and words should reflect nobility. A word sweetly spoken, an act of service or needed help rendered unconditionally and without obligation, or even a silent thought of goodwill and kindness sent out to the world, are in the broad sense reflections of a real missionary work. Such apparently simple things can do much to relieve the world of suspicions and hatreds, of lobha and doṡa, which are, as a matter of fact, at the root of the ghastly military activities stampeding the world over, at present. Humanity is being crushed under the weight of its own greed and hatred, and even noble science has been hired to render a helping hand in this destruction. No doubt nations are at the throats of one another, but the ultimate responsibility rests with the individuals, who constitute the nations. National harmony and inter-national peace cannot come without individual peace. War is, after all, a mass expression of greed and hatred and unless greed and hatred are controlled in the individuals through ethico-moral culture, there can not be any possibility of removing international distrusts or actual conflicts. To solve such knotty problems, Buddhism can render a great help.

Further, no religion need be afraid of Buddhism, for if Buddhism excites fear, it is no Buddhism in the real sense. Buddhism is a religion of unbounded loving kindness, and even the beasts are not excluded from enjoying their birth-right of protection and kindness under its banner. Buddhism is a broad-minded perfection of self-culture, and as self-culture forms more or less a part of all religions, no religion worth the name can come into clash with Buddhism, for every religion will find in Buddhism principles and details of self-culture expounded with perfection. Buddhism, itself a perfection of toleration, should be the beloved ideal and companion of all religions, at least so far as its moral ethics are concerned which form its essential part.

It may now be asked, that, if such is the wide range of Buddhism, what actually makes one a Buddhist, or in other words, WHO IS A BUDDHIST?

The answer is plain.

Any one,

Who loves Truth and takes refuge in that Truth,

Who loves Truth and honours One who discovers Truth,

Who loves Truth and honours those who walk on the Path of Truth,

Who loves ethico-moral character and strives for moral perfection,

Who perceives the actuality of Change, Pain and Unreality of phenomena and strives to achieve that state which is beyond Change, Pain or a selfish Ego,

Who abhors evil thoughts, avoids useless painful words and keeps off from harmful acts, and cultivates instead thoughts of loving-kindness, utters words of kindly wisdom and acts unselfishly for general good,

Who comes out of his materialistic surroundings and views all persons and animals as his friends and relations, as associates on the globe, as co-pilgrims towards perfection, and lends them a helping hand in pain, sharing with them his happiness and comforting them in their sorrows, and, in fine, any one,

Who comes out of his petty Ego, realises the impermanence of phenomena, feels the pangs of life, and through thoughts of wisdom and acts of goodness, abstains from evil and acquires virtue, keeping as his ultimate aim Final Escape from all that is Pain, Change and Ego.

Any one who is more or less such or aspires to be such, is indeed somewhere on the Path of Wisdom, which is in other words the Path to Bodhi, the Light of Buddhism. He is worthy of being received as one on the Path of Bodhi and is a Noble Buddhist. Whether he visits pagodas, undergoes the repetition of the Three Refuges, whether he was born of Buddhist parents, loves rituals and ceremonials, or not ,he is in essence a Buddhist. The moment such a person learns of the doctrine of the Buddha, 'the little dust' at once falls off his eyes, his perception of Truth becomes keener and his progress to sainthood is very rapid. Many such people await the preaching of the doctrine. They, in their own interest and in the interest of the future of Buddhism, should be offered the Dhamma: monks should strive with diligence to remove the 'dust' from the eyes of such persons. There can be no greater merit than that. Such persons are indeed, even without pagodas and formal refuges, truer Buddhists than even many of the actual formal Buddhists. Their heart is their pagoda: their resolve and conduct their best refuge. What greater test of Buddhism than that is needed? Let us esteem them.

Wherever there is virtue, there is wisdom, wherever there are virtue and wisdom, there is Buddhism. That is the broad definition of the Buddha's doctrine. That alone can create in us a lively affection for goodness, wisdom and virtue, wherever these be found and they alone can unite us in a Universal Brotherhood of love, wisdom and virtue, leading us to happiness here and to Joy hereafter. That is the aim of religion: that, in main, is the object of the Dhamma.

LET US 'STRIVE WITH DILIGENCE'
TO GAIN THE IDEAL.

PEACE TO ALL BEINGS.

APPENDIX

SELF-CONSOLATION

I

In life smetimes one is face to face with death or an extreme faithlessness on the part of a beloved near relation or a dear friend, or one may have to pass through a serious personal illness, or may have to suffer some great material loss. Dejection is the first reaction of such a shock, and its intensity and duration is usually in direct proportion to the attachment towards the lost object or relationship. After a variable interval the mental depression either gradually terminates into surrender to 'fatalism' or acceptance of one's inevitable Kamma, or is replaced by profound 'pessimism', or, if good Kamma has it, it may become the basis of an important spiritual experience. Sometimes the loss brings a profound psychic experience that markedly alters one's appraisement of life and its concomitants, and thus proves to be a turning or even an accelerating point in one's spiritual career. Until and unless some such self-consolation or experience is attained, the mind continues restless and the world presents a dark and dreary outlook.

II

Life is an alloy of joys and sorrows. I had my joys: I had my shocks too. The joys fled by swiftly and the shocks, though they hung on for a time, had ultimately to be compromised with.

In September 1932 I developed a submaxillary calculus which necessitated a surgical operation on my neck, and the operation was performed on the 29th September. Unfortunately the wound became septic and I had to suffer agony in bed for a number of days. Hardly had I emerged from my meditative convalescence, when on the 25th October I received the shocking telegram from India that my youngest brother, Shiva, had died on the 23rd October. Later I learnt that, during my illness a telegram to the effect that he was seriously ill was received, but in view of my bad health, the news was not let out to me.

The shock was naturally great. Not only a sweet, dear, lovely brother, but also a genius in whom rested the hopes and aspirations of myself, our parents and the entire family, had parted from us, crossed through the mysterious 'veil of death' and gone to the 'unknown' for ever. I felt the loss all the more, for I had not only failed to render him my affectionate services or professional help, but had even failed to have a last look at or a parting with him. The weakness left by my illness had further made me hypersensitive to the shock. Messages of condolence poured in, but neither those, nor the kind words of sympathy or consolation from other friends or relations helped me much to come out of the gloom that followed the news. My philosophy appeared to fail me in practice, and to cut short the whole story, I was quite sentimental. The whole day was passed in bed and in gloom.

III

The next day an urgent professional call came from a distant town. A woman was seriously ill with complicated pneumonia and was pronounced by her physicians as hopeless. Her people, despite the story of my weakness and loss, were very insistent on my treating her. I had almost refused when the thoughts occurred to me:

> "This woman is as much beloved to them as my late Shive was to me. If I refuse to attend on her and she dies, will they not suffer the same kind of shock that I am suffering today? If she can live, or at least if she can be made comfortable, through my services, will I not be relieving her of the pain my brother must have suffered, and her relations of the possible pang which I am suffering today and which they mad have to suffer in a few days, in case I refuse to treat? Thus my refusal may possibly help to extend the sphere of pain and pang. Is it good to make others also suffer a loss, when I am bemoaning a death? Is it good to let others suffer a loss when I can possibly alleviate that? Is it not good to make others comfortable and happy by using the skill I couldn't use to help my brother? Will it not be the best of service in the memory of my departed brother to alleviate the sufferings of others, no matter whether those be rendered at personal inconvenience or mental discomfort? Why not drown my sorrow by alleviating the sorrows of others?"

With such thoughts as my inspiring guide, I managed to drive to the patient and did my best to help her with physical medicines and mental good wishes. In due course she recovered and visited our place with a deep and touching message of sympathy and condolence at my bereavement and heartfelt thankfulness for the possible inconvenience caused to me at my first visit to her. I on my part, silently in my mind, thanked her for the precious lesson she had taught me unawares and the touch of consolation she had bestowed on me through my musings on the call from her.

IV

It was the 29th October 1932, the Dewali night, the festival of Lights for the Hindu world. But, we were in sorrow at our recent bereavement. Towards nightfall, while seated gloomily in an easy chair, alone in the room except our little baby sleeping peacefully in a cot nearby, I fell into a sort of meditative musings. Sighingly I said to myself, "This Dewali, which is bright Dewali to many others, is a Dark Dewali to me: it is not the same to everybody. Alright, let us bear it, for there is no other way." And then instantly my gaze fell on the lovely little baby peacefully sleeping nearby. "This child", I mused "we got and we are happy: this child must have been lost to somebody and there must be wailing for him somewhere. Happiness here, sorrow there: light here, darkness there: a birth here, a death there: union here, a separation there: the sun that has risen here must have set somewhere else: a mother, a wife, a sister or a daughter she must have been there, and she is a babe here, a daughter and a sister: they lost her and must be weeping, we gained her and are rejoicing." Then I paused to ponder over and assimilate the truth that had so vividly manifested itself. And again I soliloquised, "Is it good to rejoice at another's loss? Is it good to feast when others sorrow?" And again after a thoughtful break, "They lost and I feel happy: when I lost, was that not a source of joy to somebody somewhere. A sun that set there, rose here ; a sun that set here, must have risen somewhere else. . . . A sun that rises must set, and a sun that sets must rise. Then why sorrow and rejoice? Is it not sheer ignorance? Life continues: nobody dies and nothing is lost: death and birth are mere stages in the continuity of life. Then why should I grieve for the loss of my brother? The loss to me must be gain to somebody else: he might be fulfilling a nobler function in a higher role in some superior sphere, or else why was he called so early when we, his elders, are still left here? Therefore why should I send him sentiments of sorrow; such sentiments may harm him: let me send him good wishes wherever he be.''

Thoughts as these consoled me immensely for a while. But then again the question came,'' Will I ever be able to see him again?'' And the answer was quick, ''Yes, why not? Only, I may fail to recognise him. Who knows, he who was my youngest brother here, may be preparing to be my father there. Relations are an association in time and space, a scheme to stimulate the spiritual spark in us by shocks of joy and sorrow, union and separation. They are a specialised part of environment meant to make us realise the impermanence of the physical phenomenon: first they attract us with a positive force generating joy, and then they shift us from joy to sorrow with a backward bounce. Such shocks bring us in time out of our littlenesses, and we slowly losing our selfish attachments move on till the spiritual spark in us shines more and more brightly and ultimately merges into the universal spirit. At that stage we all become ONE, all mine and thine ceases. In that ONE all our so-called lost relations are included, but as our egoistic sense of 'we' and 'our' by the time that stage is reached, is lost, the question of finding a particular relation does not arise.'' Instantly the baby woke and my meditation ceased, but I felt a peace of mind that was enough to make me attend to my duties.

30th December, 1932.

NOTE.—The above note was written towards the end of the year 1932. The self-consolation described above, though real in nature, was not sufficient in degree, to bestow a lasting peace of mind. It was at its best a psychological patch-up, which off and on got torn, with the little touch of association of ideas connected with the life of my brother. Anyway, it served an excellent practical purpose and filled admirably the interval till I found real solace in the embrace of Buddhism early in 1933.

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